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ISIS:

AN EGYPTIAN PILGRIMAGE.

BY

JAMES AUGUSTUS ST. JOHN.

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"From town to town—from clime to clime—
He stealeth along with the stealing time,
Pausing nowhere—tarrying none,
But wandering ever, away, and on."
T. K. HERVEY.

Ἡ μέγιστη τῶν θεῶν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων Ἶσις.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1853.

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ISIS:

AN

EGYPTIAN PILGRIMAGE.

PART III.

(CONTINUED.)

IX.

I HAVE often thought that a curious and charming little volume might be written on the superstitions of the Nile. Nothing is so remarkable among the Orientals as the power of faith. They believe in all miracles, and even impossibilities do not shock them. In them the infancy of humanity appears to be revived, and their myths and legends, which, with slight variations, have descended to them from the remotest antiquity, seem like the nursery tales of the human race.

Wise men will probably turn up their noses at them for this, but making no pretensions to wisdom, I feel that I have no right to speak or think con-

temptuously of so large a division of mankind. On the contrary, I always lend the most compassionate and indulgent ear to all sorts of superstitions, traditions, and fables, imagining I can detect in them the relics of creeds and systems antecedent to all existing creeds and forms of intellectual energy. Possibly, also, they may be proofs that man is a creature who has wandered out of his proper sphere, bearing, however, unconsciously along with him dim and obscure indications of his original state, to which he concedes a sort of dream-like existence, when he sits down calmly in the shadow, as it were, of his own meditations, and endeavours to cast his thoughts backwards to a period in which, according to universal conviction, he enjoyed a sort of beatified idleness, on which he has bestowed the name of the Golden age.

The poets of antiquity were really prophets, when they selected the most inflexible of all the metals to characterise the times in which we live. Everything has now assumed a stiff and impracticable shape. Thoughts, ideas, opinions, have long been stereotyped like the forms of Egyptian sculpture, and it is deemed irreverent, almost impious, to lay one of them aside, and go in search of any darling novelty that may come floating in upon the horizon of our souls, like a freshly created star. We make ourselves, therefore, the guardians of the sanctuary of old notions, in the dim porch of which

we sit night and day, barking like Cerberus if we observe any newly-born idea with its infant wings attempting to fly past us and make its way in.

But we should be sorely perplexed were any one to request us to explain why we cling in this desperate manner to our intellectual antiquities, as if prejudice and error constituted the only great heirloom of the human race, stripped of which it would be poor indeed.

Nevertheless, nothing is more clear than that everything human must decay, human structures, human institutions, human creeds, and, alas! human beauty also. Down to the pit must they go, and become a prey to dumb forgetfulness. As others have already observed, the whole crust of our planet has probably been once alive; that is to say, the very soil, by cultivating which we live, has every atom of it once formed part of a human body; so that we may literally be said to move everlastingly among the dust of generations passed away. Why then should we expect perpetuity for the modes of belief prevalent among a race so transitory? Truth, indeed, is imperishable, because it means the relations existing between our ideas and the things they represent, which cannot be destroyed, because, should they cease to exist in finite and created beings, they would still be found in the infinite and uncreated. Truth, consequently, is the only thing not subject to decay; but as it is nowhere embraced by man without some alloy of

error, whatever he believes or teaches must be in its forms transitory like himself.

This reflection should render us tolerant, and at the same time deliver us from an irrational attachment to our own notions. Let us with the old philosopher be convinced that we know nothing; save this, perhaps,—that to do good is to fulfil the end of our existence. Respecting what is good, and how it is to be done, we must always entertain different opinions, because of the different measures of our capacities.

Let me, however, return to the superstitions of the Nile, which are, perhaps, still as wild, strange and wayward as when Isis and Osiris reigned over the Valley, and clothed it with poetical beauty.

In a small picturesque glen, situated among the roots which the Arabian mountains send down to the river, stands the tomb of Sheikh Said. Like most other edifices of the kind, it consists of a square basement, terminating in a dome, surmounted by a spherical ornament of stone. The interior of this building, of which the Arabs speak frequently, I had a strong desire to see, because it is filled with the models of ships and boats, with diminutive sails, oars and rudders—a sort of nautical museum, presided over by the spirit of the holy derwish, who is still, according to tradition, permitted to watch in a material, though invisible form over the destinies of those who live upon the sacred stream.

Inspired with this belief, every sailor who passes up or down the river, however scanty may be his means, casts into the water a small offering of bread for Sheikh Said. Superstition is not logical; the pious Arabs, therefore, perceive no contradiction in attributing to the spirit of the derwish unity and multitude. They believe, in defiance of metaphysics, that his soul, descending into the river, infuses itself into a number of little fishes, which, as the bread floats miraculously towards the shore, ascend, put their heads above water, and eat it. Thus refreshed, the material soul of Sheikh Said returns to his tomb, and there, brooding over the events of his mortal life, and the attributes and perfections of God, continues from age to age plunged in immeasurable felicity.

When I ascended with Suliman through the dense grove of mimosas, tamarisks, palms, and other trees, which encircle the tomb, I felt how beautiful and beneficent is the influence of devotion. My companion's face was radiant with pleasure, because I listened with respect to the legend of Sheikh Said. He informed the keeper, whose solitary life it is impossible not to regard with surprise, that, though not belonging to the children of the prophet, I held in great reverence the holy men of El-Islam, which procured for me an invitation to enter the interior of the tomb. I thought it best, however, to decline the offer, because I had my boots on, and notwithstanding the Arab's

polite assurances to the contrary, I felt persuaded I should be outraging his feelings if I went in. Besides, there was no sacrifice in my self-denial, for standing outside the threshold and putting in my head I was able to see everything in the building.

X.

Another extraordinary superstition is a relic of serpent-worship, found much higher up the valley, among the eastern mountains. This I had good reason to remember, as, in my search after the edifice in which the serpent is supposed to live, I narrowly escaped being dashed to atoms.

Leaving my boat one morning early, I struck off from the river with Suliman, and made towards a great opening in the mountains, said to lead to the tomb of Sheikh Haridi. There is not a more singular spot in Egypt. From the gap several hundred feet above in the rocky chain, a mighty semi-cone of sand and stony detritus descends to the bottom of the valley, steep, slippery, and yielding like the ashes of a volcano to the foot, but still susceptible of being climbed by energy and perseverance. I am myself fond of this sort of exercise, especially when in search of anything new, and Suliman, in spite of his large heavy shoes, shared the same feeling. The scene around appeared to me extremely wonderful, especially as everything was wrapped in silence. A few

eagles, in search of amusement rather than of prey, were wheeling about lazily in the sun far above the rocks, now appearing like specks in the sky, now descending and reflecting the sunshine from their broad wings.

When we had climbed to the summit of the half-cone, we observed on one side a pathway leading over a rocky ledge to a suite of spacious apartments, hewn out in the face of the rocks, and from a height of probably three hundred feet overlooking the river and the valley. Nothing could be more cool or delicious than such a dwelling, and the rooms were sufficiently spacious and numerous to accommodate a large family. How I wished at the moment I had had my wife and children there. That one should in such a situation be completely cut off from the world is not to be denied, but with health, hope, and contentment, who would care for that? It is true that, after the season of youth, different sentiments might intrude themselves, but if the love of retirement be genuine, here a man might certainly indulge it to his heart's content.

This, however, had not been the dwelling of Sheikh Haridi, in search of which we crossed the gap, and there found a path not more than nine inches wide, running out along the face of the cliffs, round a bluff projection which beetled out for a hundred and fifty feet overhead. I still tremble as I recal to mind that dreadful place. Observing that it led

to a grotto cut in the rock, about two hundred and fifty feet above the Valley, and imagining this might be the retreat of the serpent, I determined, if possible, to reach it. Suliman, with superstitious eagerness, took the lead. The path, narrow as it was, had been rendered more perilous by the action of the sun and air, which had crumbled it away in several places, so that there was scarcely anything on which to rest the foot. At our departure from the semi-cone we ran, of course, no danger, but ere we had advanced twenty paces, the depth beneath us had increased to sixty or seventy feet: we were compelled to move cautiously, with our faces against the perpendicular cliff, holding by little unevenesses or projections of the rock, the difficulty and the peril augmenting every moment.

The cold perspiration now bursts over my whole frame as I remember my sensations. When I looked down between my feet, and beheld the tremendous height beneath, my head became giddy in an instant, and to this hour it is inexplicable to me how I did not immediately let go my hold and tumble backwards. Suliman was about two paces in advance, and not to frighten him, I made no allusion to the hideous depth, but observed quietly that I thought we had better return, to which he very readily assented. We, therefore, began to make our way back, my fingers clutching the rock convulsively, and my brain whirling with terror. I recollect distinctly that at one point of

our retreat the rocks seemed to have grown more friable, as little bits came off in my hand, but I dug my nails into it till the blood almost came, and in this fashion worked my way back, until I stood once more on the summit of the semi-cone, with much the same feelings that a man gets out of a mortar just about to explode. Suliman, putting his foot upon the ground, exclaimed,—

"In the name of God, I will never venture in such a place again!"

"Not at my request, certainly, Suliman," said I.

Had we succeeded in reaching the grotto, it seems perfectly certain we must have perished there or in the attempt to return, for on narrowly scrutinising from below the face of the perpendicular rock, I felt convinced that no assistance could have been afforded us, either from the Valley or from the summit of the chain. Yet in the early ages of Christianity, some hermit or hermits used, it cannot be doubted, to crawl along that giddy height; but they were always prepared for martyrdom, and I shrewdly suspect that several of them must have met with it on the face of that precipice.

XI.

Entering the opening in the mountain we found two pathways, one leading down into a deep circular gorge, the other over a series of broad ledges to the foot of a honeycombed precipice, at

the summit of which exists what has not been inaptly denominated the Valley of Diamonds ; not the one into which Sinbad the sailor descended, but sufficiently entraordinary in appearance to have suggested the idea to an Arab.

Up the face of this cliff it was necessary to climb. I commenced, therefore, and Suliman followed me. Time and the corrosive action of the air had scooped the scarp of the rocks into the most fantastic shapes, giving them in some places the resemblance of a stupendous pile of coiled cables, and elsewhere of an infinite series of bird's nests, hollow, twisted, inverted, and transformed by miracle into stone.

The morning sun now began to shine upon us, and the heat rendered our exertions considerable. However, we would not desist until we surmounted the difficulty, and entered a narrow valley at the summit of the ridge, where a wilderness of crystal, glittering and glowing in the sun, burst upon our sight, here retreating into transparent caves, there ascending in columns; in one place strewing the ground with diaphanous blocks, and elsewhere overarching passages with wreaths and canopies and tabernacles, half-penetrated with light. We had entered the very elysium of fairy-land, a valley five hundred feet above the level of the Nile, excavated in the summit of the Arabian chain, fit to be the paradise and palace of the Jinn, where their silvery forms might alight by moonlight, and

plunge in half-spiritual enjoyment far above the abode of mortals, among the aërial pinnacles of the earth.

Having reached the highest part of the ridge, we looked around us with extraordinary delight. On one side, the mountains descended by an easy slope towards the table-land of the desert, which probably in that place had never been trodden by the foot of an European; on the other, a perpendicular precipice, between five and six hundred feet deep, swept down to the Egyptian valley; while in silence, sunshine, and beauty, the majestic Nile poured eternally its waves northward, the tribute of interior Africa to the Mediterranean.

Some former traveller, in his attempt to lower a crystal pillar from this elevated table land into the great circular gorge, suffered it to slip, and down it went, dashing from rock to rock, splintering and shivering as it fell, and glittering in the sun's rays like a shower of diamonds. From the summit I brought away a small transparent block, which I still possess, as a memento of the crystal wilderness in which the traveller may wander among the heights of the Arabian mountains.

Descending into the hollow, we continued our search for the tomb of Sheikh Haridi, and at length discovered it at the extremity of a rocky projection, of which, at a distance, it appeared to form a part. Here, as in the tomb of Sheikh Said, we found models of ships and many votive offerings

of various kinds, but for some time could perceive no traces of the great serpent, said to make his appearance daily to devour the offerings left for him on a sort of stone altar. Presently we observed a large crevice in the rock, which, as we suspected, led down into his den. There, in the body of this reptile, the soul of Sheikh Haridi is believed to continue for ever, for when the serpent dies, another, engendered by him, takes his place, and presents to the faithful a perpetual object of worship.

Of this form of idolatry we find traces in the very earliest ages of the world; as soon, at least, as the symbol came to be confounded with the thing typified. The ancient Egyptians, whose whole system of thought was so involved, subtle, and mystical, fancied they discovered some analogy between the character of the serpent and that of Knouphis or Phthah, the supreme artificer of the universe. With them, therefore, the serpent became the emblem of wisdom, and to this Christ may possibly allude in the words, "Be ye wise as serpents." We may also suppose that the part played by this reptile in the garden of Eden may have influenced the primitive worship of mankind, which seems to have had a tendency to deify every form of power.

XII.

Here and there, thinly scattered through the Valley, are a number of Koptic monasteries, the inmates of which affect to imitate in their discipline the severities of ancient times. Of all human institutions, that of celibacy, whether for monks or clergy, is the most monstrous and absurd. No doubt a man has a right to follow the course of life which is most agreeable to himself, unless it can be proved that by so doing he trenches on the rights or happiness of others. The readers of Paradise Lost will remember the terrible expedient imagined by Eve for concentrating upon herself and upon her husband the whole weight of the curse pronounced against humanity in general: "Childless thou art," exclaimed she to Adam, "childless remain!" and had her counsel been followed, all those countless millions which have since sprung into being, to taste of happiness or misery, would have been blasted, as it were, in the bud. It would have been as if all the human race had committed suicide. The monastic vow originates in the same spirit which suggested that criminal policy to Eve, being a contrivance, as far as it goes, to cut off the stream of humanity, and prevent its reaching the goal marked for it by destiny.

Monks, in general, are too ignorant to comprehend the whole extent of their crime, which,

properly considered, is an endeavour to quench all the charities of domestic life, all the dear relations of wife and husband, parent and child, sister and brother. To the childless and unloving the world is a blank wilderness, and God, the root of love as of existence, can only be a cold abstraction, thrown far remote from human sympathies into the infinite solitudes of space. Love is the substance by which alone we can bridge the abyss between unity and duality. Without it we stand alone in the universe, sympathising with none, sympathised with by none; and it is even doubtful, if this isolation be voluntary, whether the soul can ever raise itself to an undoubting confidence in its Creator. The first injunction of God to man was that he should be a husband and a father, since even infinite wisdom could devise no better means of softening and purifying the heart.

Look at the universe of thought, of emotion, of sentiment, of sympathy growing out of the union of the sexes, which gives rise to aspirations towering to heaven and throwing their interminable shadows forward over the spaces of eternity. Nothing is too great to be hoped by him who has constituted himself a middle link between the endless generations passed and the endless generations to come. Every man who is a father is a transmitter of the divine essence imparted to our race when God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul; but the monk is an

incumbrance in the way of humanity; a thing of sullen superstition, which, exalting his wisdom above the wisdom of God, breaks the primary law of humanity, and quenches all generous sympathies in his nature. A thousand physical causes concur to harden his heart and entangle the mechanism of his brain. He becomes a slave to bigotry, an idolater of his own fanaticism, and having invoked secular damnation on himself, is eager to inflict torture on others.

Whoever has met, in any part of the world, individuals of this class, must have observed how perverse are their ideas, and with what earnestness and ingenuity they labour to make up to themselves for their initiatory sacrifice. In a majority of cases, perhaps, they have sought to defeat their vow, made rashly in their youth, before the development of their physical system, when they could not possibly know what was best for them. For this purpose they have become the confessors of women, whose thoughts and minds they pervert; so that wherever they exist, the ethical tone of society has been essentially lowered. At the present moment we behold them labouring all over Europe to re-establish the kingdom of darkness, in which they may reap all the advantages of a monastic organization, with the pleasures suitable to men of material habits and unrefined sentiments.

Let me not, however, be understood to denounce all the individuals in every age who have taken

upon themselves the vow of celibacy. When sincere they may, in many cases, be excused, and in all must be pitied. It is they, not society, that are the losers, except in so far as their labours might have been available to the community. It is the institution and its founders we must blame, with those who, being competent to understand the whole scope of its mischievous tendency, still seek to recommend it to the world.

I remember, when at Cairo, paying one day a long visit to the monks of Mount Sinai, who have a monastery in that city. They belonged to the Greek Church and nation, and some of them were men of fine regular features, who would have been handsome, but for the almost utter absence of intelligence. All their thoughts, if such men could really be said to think, were concentrated on their own personal enjoyments, or the petty interests of their order. The rich and varied creation which literature has called into existence for the delight, refinement, and elevation of human nature, was unknown to them. They had never been familiarized with those forms of glory inhabiting the summits of Olympus, quaffing nectar, feeding on ambrosia, and penetrating and purifying their divine natures by something still more divine, snatched up to heaven from the censers of human love. Though descended from the race which peopled old Hellas with legends, traditions, myths, which represented earth as colonized by the

descendants of Olympian gods, and which, with their arts, their philosophy, and their freedom, impress something of a god-like character on humanity itself, they seemed wholly ignorant of their origin and the history of their country, and, indeed, like Gallio, appeared to care for none of those things. Their physical systems were in a state of repletion; all the finer ducts and channels by which the animal spirits pass to and from the brain were choked up. The heart, the great fountain of sensation, had probably from the cradle been still, but there appeared in the eyes, and in that idiosyncracy of the face which we call the expression, signs that the primary emotions of the soul had never been called into activity. This imparted to their countenances an air of discontent, symptoms of their being visited at times by a consciousness of having missed the aim of life, of having been driven by some fatal accident out of the holy course traced to them by nature, and a secret apprehension that at the day of doom they might have to answer for a thousand undeveloped existences.

If, however, men will be monks, certain it is that they should fast and mortify themselves, this being the only way of preserving their spiritual natures from being absorbed and lost in materialism. They resemble bodies informed with light and heat, which, by some marvellous perversion of the laws of their existence, turn the rays and

warmth which should radiate externally, inward upon themselves, and so, unless an artificial receptacle be created, disturb and consume that delicate organization on which the infinite processes of thought depend. For this reason I have always felt a sort of horror for a monk, whom no uncontrollable circumstances or calamities of the heart had rendered such. We deceive ourselves on this subject when, visiting the ruins of ancient convents or monasteries, we find them hanging, like so many halcyon nests, in places of extreme beauty or grandeur, in which we fancy all sorts of visions of peace and serenity descending on the mind. But external nature cannot give us the calm we want within. With this all places are beautiful; without it none is. Still, I have seldom been able to pace solitarily through ruined cloisters, or to sit beneath the domes and arches of Oriental edifices once appropriated to what we call religious seclusion, without experiencing an overflowing of the soul, an indescribable secret delight, at picturing to myself the quiet lives which men or women formerly passed there. But these are mere dreams, suggested by silence and loneliness, which could not for one hour co-exist with the real experience of a monastic life.

XIII.

Everybody has sat in the fields on a warm summer's day, and observed the changes produced in

his sensations by a large mass of clouds passing in its track through the heavens between him and the sun. A momentary chill comes over his frame, he experiences a mechanical depression of spirits, his fancy droops like a flower, and the whole prospect of life becomes less brilliant and flattering.

I remember how this happened to me once at Vevay. It was a Sunday morning in June, and the little old-fashioned town, with its narrow streets, gable-ends, and cleanly-swept pavements, looked like a diminutive snug fragment of antiquity sleeping in the sun. The splendour of Jean Jacques' genius was besides diffused for me over everything, and the eyes of Julie seemed to beam invisibly from every casement, as, with my boys around me, I ascended towards Mont Chardon. What walks did we traverse, what leafy nooks, what bowers and arbours formed by nature, with flowering shrubs and trees, through which here and there the sunlight poured, glancing and glittering like a stream of gold! Up the hill we went, joyous and careless, the breast heaving with delight, as we breathed at almost every step a purer air.

Arrived at the summit, freed from trees, and literally enveloped with sunshine like a garment, what a delicious prospect lay before us! On the left, the Dent de Jamant, the Alps of St. Maurice, between which we could clearly discern the "blue rushing of the arrowy Rhône," the Rocks of

Meillerie, the magnificent sweeps and pinnacles of the Savoyard Alps, and the whole extent of the Lake of Geneva, rippling, palpitating, and laughing in the sun.

I am not a relation of Doctor Syntax, and can by no means be said to travel in search of the picturesque. But nature does occasionally unveil herself before me, in forms too beautiful to be withstood. I then yield to the sentiment of admiration, and under its influence experience a degree of pleasure of which, perhaps, I can convey no idea to others.

The children ran playing about, gathering wild flowers among the long grass, while I sat down on an old dry fallen tree, to let my thoughts settle, as it were, that they might the better reflect the mighty image of the universe.

Why cannot we prolong such moments which we would gladly protract to all eternity? Nothing is more natural, nothing more common than to experience this sort of rapture among the grand mountains of Switzerland. But all great feelings are universal, and when we speak, therefore, of our sensations to others, it is not that we doubt their having felt the same, but that we fully believe it, and reckon upon their sympathy for that reason.

Before me, in bewildering magnificence, from above Geneva, southward by Mont Blanc, and eastward towards St. Gothard and the Tyrol, a thousand nameless peaks clothed with virgin snow

lay meek and nun-like in a stupendous semicircle, beneath a sunlight that flooded and seemed to penetrate their forms.

Through the depths of unknown valleys embosomed in those mountains, Rousseau had wandered with Madame de Warens, and to them in after life his mind constantly reverted, whilst struggling to regenerate a corrupt society, and to impress the character of his own free thoughts on the civilization of his age. I may say, too, with Wordsworth :—

> "I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
> The sleepless Soul that perish'd in his pride;
> Of Him who walk'd in glory and in joy,
> Following his plough along the mountain-side."

Whilst I was engaged in these delicious reveries, the clouds, unobserved by me, had gathered behind the Jura, and presently, sweeping before the wind, precipitated themselves over the sun. Everything at once became chill and dismal, a drizzling rain soon began to fall, and kept us for some hours prisoners in a neighbouring chalet, where we amused ourselves, as well as we could, by drinking fresh milk, and eating bread and cheese. As the clouds, however, continued their march through the sky, half dissolving as they passed, it became necessary at length to face the showers, and we descended to Vevay, cold, dripping, and out of conceit with everything.

There are periods in one's life during which we

may be said to be passing perpetually through a cloud. Like Glendower, you call up spirits of cheerfulness from the vasty deep, but they will not come when you do call on them. You make, therefore, the best you can of the melancholy that oppresses you, and dally with it, and convert its creations into sources of interest, if not of amusement.

This is what Vere and I used to do in our boat at night, when, weary of our day's pilgrimage to the shrines of the Egyptian gods, we sat down after dinner to smoke, drink coffee, and tell stories. He had travelled a great deal more than I about England, and was much fonder of it. I have other preferences on the Mediterranean, in the East, and God knows where; but I am not without a certain predilection for the old country, though a social blight has passed over it, and robbed it, in my eyes, of half its beauty.

This, however, was not the case with Vere. He had no yearning for the people, no absorbing desire to render them worthy of the world in which God has placed them. He was an extremely good fellow, and very much my friend, yet we never could agree about the destiny of our species, or about what ought to be done by each individual toward promoting the happiness of the greater number. But in story-telling we were much of a mind, and one evening, after having passed the day among the ruins of Cynopolis, he related to

me the melancholy fate of the Antiquarian, exactly as I have given it in Margaret Ravenscroft.

It was by this time growing very late; but we neither of us felt any inclination to go to bed. His boat was moored close to mine beneath the lofty bank of the Nile, the Arabs were all fast asleep, the river was without a ripple, and nothing was heard around but the jackal's distant howl, reverberating among the rocks of the Arabian mountains. I piled up, therefore, the bowl of my pipe with Gebeli, and gave him in return a story, related to me by my friend, T. K. Hervey.

"While travelling," he said, "in the days of stage-coaches through Derbyshire, and, for the sake of enjoying a cigar, sitting upon the box beside the driver, I observed, on the top of a large mammellated hill, three magnificent elm-trees, which appeared to stand at the corners of an equilateral triangle. With these elms was connected a curious tradition, which the coachman related as he drove along.

XIV.

"Many years ago, there was somewhere in the neighbourhood an old family, which possessed a fine estate, and a mansion rather more than suitable to its dimensions. Fond of show and splendour, the several heirs to the estate exhibited one after another the same taste, making all sorts of sacrifices, in order to vie with, or outdo their neighbours,

and burdening their paternal acres with debt, which could only be liquidated by successive sales of portions of the estate.

"The house was quite in the old style, irregular, spreading, heterogeneous, because built at different epochs by persons of dissimilar tastes, who never pulled down anything, but went on adding wing to wing, and room to room, till there was in course of time created a perfect wilderness of apartments, turrets, corridors, galleries and staircases. At length it fell into the hands of a widow, with three sons, who at the period of their father's death were mere lads. Their mother, a woman of stately manners but affectionate heart, being incapable of managing the small farm to which the estate had now been reduced, engaged a man to act as a sort of steward; but he, instead of faithfully performing his duty, took advantage of the ignorance of the widow to precipitate her and her children more deeply into poverty. As was natural, she clung to the old mansion, now for the most part dilapidated, and stripped of its pictures and furniture. Her name contrasted strikingly with her situation and prospects;—it was Merryfield, which to a stranger would have suggested the idea of a blithe woman, favoured by fortune, and full of inbred contentment.

"But in truth Mrs. Merryfield was extremely sad, and with her youngest boy in her hand, and the elder two walking before or after her, would

often pace through the empty halls of Merryfield Court, sometimes looking up at what remained of the family pictures, sometimes at those places on the wall where they had formerly hung.

"I have no sympathy with the cherishers of aristocratic traditions, and look upon the accidents that shatter or disperse them as so many beneficent processes designed by Providence to remove from society offensive inequalities. But our reason and our feelings are occasionally at variance, and therefore, while the former applauds those changes and chances which blot out old families, as hurricanes blow down old trees, to make way for new ones, the latter perversely interest themselves about the relics of antiquity, and dwell with painful solicitude on the circumstances which lead to decay and dissolution.

"Mrs. Merryfield had been beautiful; was, indeed, beautiful still; but her mind, given up to a sort of romance, and furnished with little useful knowledge, could scarcely be so denominated, though her principles were good and her affections pure and noble. She was, it is said, tall and stately, and much given to musing on the waning fortunes of her house, which seemed to be crumbling away by a sort of mechanical necessity, no one knew how or why.

"For several generations nothing had prospered with the Merryfields, so by degrees they all got possessed by the belief that it was impossible

they could be successful in anything. Above all, this was the firm conviction of the lovely and noble mother, who would often at midnight steal, lamp in hand, to the chamber where her three sons slept, and sit down there, trying to figure to herself what they might be doomed to encounter hereafter. Names they had, of course, but I repeat them not. It boots not now, indeed, to recal them to memory. Familiar, however, they were to that mother, who murmured them to herself in gentle accents, as she sat in turn by each little bed, and breathed an instinctive and inaudible prayer that the cloud which had for ages settled over the Merryfields might disperse, and let in the sunshine of prosperity upon them.

"What, however, is history, but an account of the sad dealings of destiny with certain families and nations? There is a Providence which shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we please! The whole tissue of our life is woven with mysterious threads, not spun by us; nor is ours the invention of the figures which illuminate or darken the landscape. Calamity comes unsought; death performs his task without our bidding; parents are taken away; brothers and sisters fade; the guardians and solace of our lives perish in our sight; our children, the bright and beautiful, are shown to us like visions, and having dazzled and enchanted our gaze for a moment, are drawn back into the darkness, and the place which knew them knows them no more for ever.

"In a certain mansion near Derby, we may still see a picture representing Mrs. Merryfield by the bedside of her eldest boy, her face pale, her large dark eyes suffused with tears, her hair loose and dishevelled, her right hand supporting her head, while her left lies upon her lap, in token of hopeless resignation. It is night, and the glare of a lamp, falling on her countenance and figure, awakens extraordinary ideas. She seems formed to be the mould of a great race, to transmit superior qualities, intellectual and moral, to posterity, to reproduce and quicken beauty like her own, and to be a lamp of excellence to the present and to the future. But if you study the eyes and the forehead, you become aware of the presence of a fatal Nemesis, and never for one moment doubt that you behold before you a woman prolific of misfortune linked to the calamities of former times; and doomed to exercise a tragic influence that may cast a shadow over the time to come.

"Well, under this mother's eye the three boys grew up, and as they grew she faded. From her they had derived life, from her they had derived all the knowledge they possessed; for the dishonesty of the steward left them not the means of education, and at length it became necessary for them to subsist by the labour of their hands. Merryfield Court was sold, and the chief part of the proceeds consumed by hereditary debts. One field after another followed the mansion, and still the tide of

ill success set in strong against them. To crown all, their mother was seized by her last illness, with which death came obviously hand in hand. The three sons stood around her bed, endeavouring to repay by manly tenderness and care the love and anxieties of twenty years. A ray of joy and satisfaction gleamed over this closing scene. Her voice had not yet lost all its power, and in sweet and touching accents she gave them her counsel and her blessing.

"'In leaving this world, my children,' said she, 'I can say that God has not been unmindful of me. Outward misfortunes I have had to endure, but these, perhaps, have in reality proved so many blessings, because they have afforded you, my sons, innumerable occasions of showing your love and obedience; and my happiness is that you have let none escape you.

"'What I have felt and suffered in your behalf, I have not suffered and felt in vain. Go forward, then, my children; you can never be unhappy, though all the sorrows of the world should be accumulated on your heads. For where the sunshine of the heart exists, nothing external to your own souls can obscure or diminish it. Remain united while you can, for union is in itself a blessing; but should separation become necessary, should you be thrown far apart on the surface of the earth, remember, there is a point above you at which all the rays of existence are found to con-

verge and mingle. There you will meet, my children, with each other and with me. Persevere, therefore, in the great work of affection and love; be as brothers what you have been as sons, and the united influence of the world will not be able to deprive you of your noblest inheritance,—the blessing of God, and the respect of all that is upright and honourable among men.'

XV.

"Shortly after their mother's death, the brothers found, on looking into their affairs, that nothing was left them but the hill on which the three elms you noticed on passing now stand. They, therefore, consulted together, and determined to sell it, and with the proceeds, whatever they might be, to travel to three distant parts of the world, in the hope that the same influence might not pursue them all, but that out of the three, one, at least, might be prosperous, and be able in age or sickness to provide for the other two.

"They, therefore, took a silver cup, the last remnant of their family plate, and filling it with wine, repaired at night to the summit of the hill, where they sat down and drank it, and made merry together. They then took three young elms, mere seedlings, and planted them in the earth, and formed a little fence about them, and said to each other:—'When the last link that binds us to the soil of this country shall be broken, we will shake

hands, and depart each in a different direction. For ten years we will struggle with the world; after which, if we are still living, we will return to this hill, and here, under the shade of the trees we have planted, will renew our brotherly affection, and, if it may be, build up again the fortunes of our house. The earth is spacious, and the chances of life are innumerable. Possibly then, we may find fortune more propitious than she has been to the Merryfields for many generations; and, if not, why then we shall meet where our mother awaits us, happy in this, that in faithfully performing her bidding, we have fulfilled the first of all human duties.'

"There is, I suppose, some mysterious charm in territorial possessions, when they have been hallowed by fame and ancestry, when the ashes of kindred repose in them, when they have witnessed the birth and the death of those we love. But not for all men. I care nothing for place or soil, for house or patrimony. I am attached to the world as a whole; to its streams, and woods, and green valleys, but most of all to London, that great central hive of the earth, that workshop of thought, that arena of politics, where the fortunes of a quarter of the human race are influenced for good or for evil. That city, therefore, I could not quit without regret; but of the attachment of men to small localities, I understand nothing. Consequently I am unable to appreciate the feelings of

the Merryfields, who sacrificed the last remnant of their family estate with tears. If these were shed for the men and women who had lived on it, for their mother and father, and those who had preceded them, I can comprehend their grief; or if, like brothers, loving and affectionate, they wept at the idea of parting, I can look with reverence on their sorrow. But for property, even in land, I cannot frame my mind to entertain any respect; which is owing, I suppose, to some original imperfection of my nature. Once I could sympathise with Baxter, who seems to think that the bitterness of death is enhanced by parting with the books we have used and the room in which we have read them. But books are after all nothing but a means to an end, beautiful and glorious as the records of human feelings, hopes, doubts, and aspirations; but mere waste paper compared with the living sources of joy and suffering, with those vital receptacles of sentiment, to perpetuate the memory of which books and all human monuments were invented.

"When the Merryfields had sold the mammellated hill, which they did on condition that the trees they had planted should never be cut down, they disappeared from the place of their birth, and divided and went, it was never known whither. One was supposed to have directed his course to the New World, another to India, while a third continued somewhere in Europe to thrive as he

best might among the influences of our decaying civilization. But these were mere conjectures. Meanwhile the elms grew, and the neighbours watched them at first with a strong interest, though as years rolled by this interest decreased, and the Merryfields faded by degrees from the memory of most persons. But there is always a small class that loves to remember, and these used to go to the hill, especially in spring, and watch the leaves put forth and clothe the naked boughs once more with verdure. Year after year they fancied that before autumn should again crumple up those leaves and strip them one by one from the branches, and turn them red and yellow, and blow them about recklessly with its frozen breath, the youths who planted them might return, now hardy and weather-beaten men, to unite the hand of friendship beneath their increasing shade.

"But the trees still grew and they came not, and the neighbours and friends who watched the growth of the elms grew old and dropped one by one into the grave, and still the trees grew and became green every spring, and red and gold every autumn, and the memory of the brothers was transformed into a tradition, and the village youths and maidens used to come and sit down on a summer's evening under the elms, and talk of the three brothers who left the neighbourhood when their fathers and mothers were young, or before they were born.

"Every day, as the stage-coach passed on the road to Derby, some stranger remarked the size and curious position of the trees, and heard from the coachman the tradition of their planting, so that of those who read this narrative, many, if not most, will be familiar with the facts. It is said, (but this may be apocryphal,) that two generations after the planting of the elms, a lady, young, beautiful, though somewhat swarthy, appeared in the neighbourhood of Merryfield-court. She arrived in a carriage, and put up at the inn, and without making the slightest inquiry or even so much as alluding to the tradition of the trees, went to the top of the hill and sat there alone for many hours. Several months afterwards a name was observed cut faintly on the bark of the largest tree, but if any purpose was intended to be answered by it, it was not accomplished, for the name could not be deciphered.

"To this hour, therefore, the fate of the Merryfields remains involved in impenetrable obscurity. But the elms are there yet, lofty, branching, full of sap and vigour, unconscious of the melancholy associated with them; unmindful of the hands by which they were planted, and insensible to the intense yearning of the heart with which those three brothers often turned their thoughts towards them from distant lands. They continue to be agitated by the breeze, and refreshed by the rains and dews of heaven, as if they had been planted

to commemorate some propitious event, the birth of some fortunate child, or the union of two hearts made to be united, and to shed happiness over a whole district. But the elms have a reputation throughout the whole country, and have given to the eminence on which they stand the name of 'THREE-TREE-HILL.'"

XVI.

All subjects of speculation are, perhaps, lawful, when not dwelt upon with an impious spirit. I trust, therefore, I may be pardoned for giving utterance to reflections which have often passed, I may almost say involuntarily, through my mind. I have asked myself whether, if the storms and irregularities of external nature originate in the laws of providence, may we not suspect that those which sometimes desolate the moral universe proceed from the operation of the same laws, and are destined to effect some wise and good purpose?

> "If plagues and earthquakes break not heaven's design,
> Then why a Borgia or a Catiline?"

All great calamities, whether brought upon mankind by the operation of physical laws, or by their own fierce and irregular passions, chasten the heart, and raise the mind upwards towards the infinite. The dimensions of the soul seem to be expanded by suffering. Pestilences, famines, the devastation of the earth by the sword, the conflagration of

mighty cities, the ruin of families, the downfal of states and empires, contemplated in themselves, are supposed to be unmitigated evils; but who knows in what light they appear to that Infinite Intelligence who holds all created things as it were in the hollow of his hand, and views at a glance their infinitely complicated issues and consequences? Jenghis pouring his sanguinary hordes over Asia; Timur piling up pyramids of human skulls before the gates of conquered cities; Kooli Khan converting the streets of eastern capitals into canals flowing with the blood of their inhabitants, to gratify the feeling which history dignifies with the name of regal ambition, appear to unsophisticated humanity monsters of crime and cruelty. But the systems of civil polity, the forms of social life, the superstitions destroyed or shaken by their hands, and the tracks opened up by them for a better state of things, may, for aught we know, make amends to the world for the passing disasters of the time.

Be this as it may, I delight in storms of all sorts, and while traversing a portion of middle Egypt, was fortunate enough to witness one which it would be impossible for me to forget. Vere and I, being out one day upon the plain, where it was somewhat narrow, and connected itself with the desert by a series of low eminences, observed on the Libyan side of the valley a very strange appearance in the sky. It was getting towards

evening, the sun lay obscured behind a thick curtain of vapour, and along the edge of the horizon for miles stretched a blood-red belt, reposing on mountains of black clouds, and pressed down, as it were, and narrowed by dense masses of the same colour from above. The air, where we stood, seemed to have lost all motion; there was a hush, a stillness, a silence, which we felt to be painful.

Once or twice I fancied here and there over the crimson glow, slight evanescent coruscations of blue and yellow, like the phenomena which indicate the approach of the Simūm. The pleasure I experienced in gazing at this stupendous panorama, unrolled before us by nature, was mixed with awe. It seemed as if the natural course of things were about to receive some great and sudden shock. As it happened, there were no villages near, or dwellings of any kind. At intervals a few scattered palms stood up against the sky, their towering forms relieved strangely against its startling colours.

Presently a low murmur suggesting extreme remoteness was heard in the west, as if a great army were approaching the Valley under cover of those fuliginous exhalations. Every moment the sound increased in loudness, until at length our ears were smitten by the full roar of the hurricane. But the wind did not come alone. To our eyes it seemed to have lifted up the whole

Libyan desert, and to have hurled it in vast clouds into the sky.

No phenomenon in nature ever appeared more grand to me. Sometimes the surging sand-clouds suggested the idea of a whole continent on fire, with its smoke ascending in stifling and immeasurable masses to heaven, an idea which was strengthened by streams of red light bursting here and there through the gloom, and imparting to the sandy particles, hurled aloft, rolling and fluctuating in the air, the appearance of flame. In a few moments we were involved in the driving sand, which entering our mouths, nostrils, ears and eyes, excited sensations indescribably painful. We had by this time retreated to the river's bank, where, throwing our cloaks over our heads, we sat down in the lea of a sheltering ledge to let the storm pass.

We had not, however, remained long in this position, before we heard sharp cries and shouting, mingled with the extraordinary rustling sound caused by the passing of the sand along the earth. Looking forth, we observed the whole surface of the river covered with tossing waves and foam, and at a little distance to the north, our two boats pitching like nutshells, while the crews standing on the beach were holding on by all the ropes they could lay hold of, to prevent the kandjias from being blown out and submerged.

In spite of the wind and whirling sand-drifts, we rushed to the assistance of our Arabs, and

ultimately succeeded in preserving the boats, though not before the waves had entered our cabins and committed sundry depredations on the decks and elsewhere.

I almost fear to mention the greatest evil which resulted to me from this hurricane: it was the loss of my coffee-pot! This to many may seem a very trifling affair, though in reality, it was far otherwise. Had we been in Tottenham-court Road or Oxford Street, where, by stepping into the next shop, we could repair the loss, I should, perhaps, have made light of it, though it is not quite pleasant at any time to lose an old article that has done one good service. But not foreseeing the antagonism between storms and coffee-pots, I had brought only one of these utensils along with me; and now then farewell to Mokha and more than half the pleasure of smoking; for without the frothing finjan sending forth its aroma through the cabin, the gebeli would have had comparatively but little attraction. For the first time I began to associate the idea of dreariness with the slow navigation of the river. I was eager to push on to the region of coffee-pots, and felt the whole economy of my temper deranged till Vere came to my succour.

Having been thus reconciled to my disaster, I had leisure once more to observe the aspect of nature. The tornado had left us behind, and we beheld it with wonder scaling the Arabian mountains, and hurrying away magnificently towards the

Red Sea. Its topmost surges could not, I verily believe, have reached less than three miles into the air, and as they drove eastward, rent, jagged, broken into chasms or towering into pinnacles, the whole invested with a profusion of prismatic colours by the setting sun, it seemed like the fragments of a perishing world drifting away rapidly into annihilation. The sky all around it was as blue as a turquoise, while in the West, Osiris retreated towards his queen, through stupendous arches of crimson and saffron, purple and amethyst, which stretched like a gorgeous canopy over the horizon, accomplishing, as it were, the apotheosis of the dying day.

XVII.

One of the pleasures of travelling through a Mohammedan country is the absence of bells. Our ears are never split by those harsh and dissonant sounds which, throughout Christendom, torture your sensibility, tear your nerves, if you have any, and connect your habits of devotion with ideas of a metallic Babel. I own that under certain circumstances the sound of bells is pleasant, not, however, on its own account, but because it has accidentally become associated in your memory with beloved images.

On a soft summer's evening, when the ding-dong comes upon your ear from a distance, enveloped, as it were, with the dewy sweetness of twilight, it

awakens an echo in your heart more delicious than the thrill of the nightingale. In my own case, it does this, because it brings vividly to mind evenings whose light and glory have gone for ever, when I put my little hand in my mother's, and walked with her through meadows gemmed with wild flowers, spotted with fairy-rings, and traversed by willow-fringed brooks, to pray with her or hear her pray in one of those quiet, antique churches which impart a religious aspect to the very landscapes of these islands.

I remember, too, when I lived on the Côte d'Or in Burgundy, that the bells of Dijon used to sound deliciously on a summer's morning, when wandering, surrounded by my children, along the lofty hills near the Roman encampment. The loud, wild, irregular bursts of sound seemed to swell up from the depths of the valley, rendered richer and mellower by the golden expanse of sunshine they traversed. Besides, God knows what we have not done or suffered while church-bells have been ringing; and some dim, shadowy reminiscence of all this may, for aught we know, infuse itself into the feeling with which we listen to a cathedral's chimes, or what people are apt to denominate a merry peal. To me, however, nothing is more indissolubly linked with melancholy. The sound seems to come out of the depths of the past, and to be singing the knell of youth and love.

Victor Hugo, a man of strong sympathies with

what is violent and exciting, has a striking passage in his "Nôtre Dame," on the Bells of Paris, to which Quasi-modo loved to listen from his old eyrie in the cathedral-towers. But his grotesque hero might be supposed to have had strange tastes.

At any rate, a great capital never appears to me so much like Pandemonium as when all one's calm and quiet feelings are disturbed by the clamour of innumerable bells, agitated unmercifully by tasteless knaves, who toil like so many devils in the obscurity of the belfries, to discompose the piety of their neighbours.

In Egypt, the Sunday morning always seemed to me to put on a celestial character. The bean and clover-fields, drenched with dew, diffused through the atmosphere a delightful fragrance; the absence of population imparted a poetical quietude to the scene; and if in the distance I caught glimpses of mounted Arabs or laden camels, alternately appearing and disappearing behind palm-groves or sand-hills, they only seemed to the fancy so many scriptural pictures framed by the desert and the blue sky. It was the human voice that in towns or villages called to prayer, instead of the inarticulate mutterings of bells from cupolas or steeples.

XVIII.

Walking on Christmas-day along the foot of the Arabian mountains, after turning a sharp promon-

tory, I came out upon a beautiful plain, extending from the rocks to the Nile. Notwithstanding the season of the year, a profusion of wild flowers sprinkled the soft grass, and several butterflies, some white, others brown, and others, again, sparkling with all the colours of the rainbow, were alighting here and there in the variegated chalices, out of which the dew had not yet been entirely evaporated. Bees, too, which no doubt built their combs somewhere in the neighbouring rocks, flew about through the air, warm and balmy as that of July with us, and folding their wings, dived into the large flower-bells, where they were lost to view.

It was early, and there happened to be no people in the fields. The mountains swept in a huge semicircle around the plain, protecting it from the east wind; and towards the west flowed the Nile, in that place upwards of a mile in breadth, with large palm-groves, and beyond, the desert. A delicious feeling of solitude came over me, and I sat down on a stone to watch the bees and butterflies, amused by the hum of the one and the absolutely noiseless flight of the other.

It was, probably, the absence of all sound from its movements that led the people of ancient Hellas to select the butterfly as the type of the soul. It has wings, it descends through sunshine from heaven, it subsists apparently on the breath of flowers, and of all material forms, approaches

nearest to the embodiment of an idea. Every function of its life it performs in unbroken silence; even the agonies of death extort from it no cry. It seems, moreover, to have no home upon the earth; it belongs to no particular spot, but is found everywhere associated with calm and sunshine, and eternal spring. It is too fragile, too light, too diminutive to attract continuous notice. Ascending into the air, it becomes invisible, and pursues its way through the sunshine unseen of all but God. Often, however, when it descends to earth, contact with rude and coarse objects brushes away the pearly celestial dust from its wings, and it is not until after a long flight through the pure ether, steeped in the dews of morning and the fragrance ascending from the earth, that it recovers its beauty.

So also with the soul. Caught and whirled about in the storms of passion, it contracts many stains, is drenched and battered and mutilated; but as it ascends towards God, these mementos of its sojourn upon earth disappear one after another, till, on arriving at the Divine footstool, the brightness of His glory penetrates its whole being, and it becomes pure and beautiful as before.

XIX.

Most persons who take any interest at all in the East have probably read or heard some account of the Crocodile Mummy pits. And yet it was not

until I had been a considerable time in the country, that the knowledge of their existence came to me. Leigh's narrative, in fact, there fell into my hands, in which he describes his descent, the fearful nature of the caverns, the death of his Arab guides from mephitic exhalations, and his own narrow escape with life.

As there was nothing very particular to be gained by exploring these fantastic sepulchres, it would, perhaps, have argued more prudence in me, to have resisted the temptation to visit them; but wise men seldom travel. It is only they who are tempted by curiosity, to whom strong excitement is a necessary of life, and who would almost rather quit the world altogether, than pursue an even noiseless career, that delight in groping about through mummy pits and catacombs, in danger of being suffocated by malaria, or of breaking their necks by tumbling into some bottomless gulf, treacherously yawning to receive them in the pitchy darkness of the cavern.

When we landed at Maābdè, on a fine spring morning, and entered the village in search of guides, we appeared to be regarded by the whole Muslim population as a set of ghouls, come to bring destruction upon them. Remembering how many of their friends and relatives had been already tempted by money to perish in those loathsome excavations, the women seemed inclined to mob us. I had never before experienced so much incivility,

or rather rudeness, from the Arabs. The men, indeed, though not apparently inclined to accompany us, or, if inclined, too prudent to betray their inclination to their better halves, stood silent and thoughtful, balancing in their minds between devotion to Mammon, and the pleasures of existence, even in extreme indigence. But in the women, affection overcame everything. They loved their husbands, their sons, their fathers, their brothers, and looked with absolute detestation on the wandering infidels who sought with their bags of piastres to allure a number of those poor innocent fellows to almost certain perdition.

But as Pharaoh's heart was hardened against the Israelites, so were ours made worse than the flinty rock against these poor daughters of Ishmael, who, however, determined not to be conquered easily, but crowding round us, sobbing and shedding tears, saluted our ears with hostile epithets, such as dogs, pigs, unbelievers, Jews, with whatever else their connubial or maternal rhetoric could supply. At length we pacified them by the assurance that if their friends would be our guides to the mouth of the pit, we would not insist upon their entering. Several men now agreed to go along with us, and the women, congregating on the plain beyond the village, stood gazing in silent anxiety as we pursued our way over a narrow winding path, leading up the side of the mountain.

On reaching the summit, we found that our

Maābdèans, like too many of those who undertake to conduct others through the mazes of life, were themselves completely ignorant. The aspect of the scène which now presented itself more than sufficed to compensate for the vexations of the morning and the toil of the ascent. All around, blocks or beds of crystal flashed and glittered in the sun's rays, which descended in dazzling splendour, almost kindling the mountain, and clothing it with variegated and glancing colours.

Our whole party now dispersed in search of the mummy pits, some ascending the highest portions of the ridge, others exploring the table-land, while I myself, with Suliman and one or two other Arabs, entered a precipitous rocky valley, filled at the bottom with drifts of fine sand, and leading down by a steep slope to the level of the eastern desert. Nothing could possibly appear more desolate than that wild chasm. Here and there its sides were perforated with caverns, towards which led tracks made by the feet of wolves and hyænas, and strewed thickly with bones. Into several of these we went, very thoughtlessly I must confess, for had the owners been at home, we might have terminated our search in an extremely unpleasant manner. In one, we found the fragments and fresh blood of an animal; and by the imperfect light of my candle, I fancied I saw the grim figure of a hyæna retreating into an inner recess. We intruded no further on the gentleman's privacy,

but made our way back, pistol in hand, with finger on trigger, and our faces to the foe.

I have seldom seen a more delicious picture of seclusion than was presented by that ravine, which, except on the east, appeared to have no exit, though in making towards the Nile, the gazelles, as was evident from their footmarks, found their way through in great numbers. The rocks piled fantastically on all sides seemed to invite the residence among them of some anchorite, smitten by the love of seclusion, who might here, by protracted meditations, prepare himself for another state of existence. It was, probably, the aspect of scenes like this that first suggested to man the idea of monasticism. And it is no doubt delightful to surround yourself with vast solitude, where, without the intervention of petty cares or considerations of any kind, you may commune freely with the Infinite.

Generally, the landscape before me was invested with a mantle of light, but here and there masses of shadow, produced by overhanging rocks, courted and refreshed the eye. Before you, eastward, stretched the desert, like a plain of ruddy gold, supporting on the edge of the distant horizon the basis of that vault of celestial blue which threw its mighty span overhead, and seemed to dilate your soul to its own dimensions.

As I was revelling in the grandeur of the prospect, an Arab was heard shouting far above on the

rocks, that he had discovered the resting-place of the crocodiles. On repairing to the spot, we found on the summit of the ridge an aperture resembling the head of the animal interred below. The sand blown in by the wind having filled the chasm to within thirteen or fourteen feet of the top, I leaped down at once, followed by Suliman and Vere, and having kindled our wax-tapers, made diligent search for some opening leading to the great excavation. Our exertions proved vain, and evening at length coming on, we returned to our boats, and began to resume our voyage. Our progress, however, was arrested by two or three Arabs running along the bank, and shouting that the real guides to the crocodile mummy pits had returned to the village, and would, if we pleased, lead us to them.

Upon this assurance, we sailed back to Manfalout, and passing over early next morning to the opposite bank, were conducted by a large body of guides to the very opening in the mountain we had uselessly explored the day before. In conformity with the national practice, the Arabs, having stripped nearly naked, knelt upon the sand and repeated certain prayers, as being about to undertake an enterprise full of danger. Their leader, an old man with an extremely white beard, then taking up a lamp, passed round a projection of the rock, followed by his two sons, and entered a narrow passage which we, ourselves, had failed to discover. I followed,

and Vere, with Suliman and the other Arabs, brought up the rear. After proceeding for some time, the cavern suddenly expanded and presented to the eye a prospect of infernal magnificence. The roof, rising like that of some vast cathedral, was black as night, while innumerable gloomy aisles, apparently interminable, stretched away on all sides. The walls, the pillars, the niches, the tabernacles,—in one word, all we saw, appeared to be cased with black crystal, which, sparkling and glittering as the lights passed on, suggested forcibly to the mind the idea of hell, towering and dilating before one in satanic grandeur. Everything around wore a fuliginous aspect. In the floor were chasms of unknown depth, descending between black rocks, moist and slippery; while the most loathsome effluvia, pestiferous as those of Avernus, filled the atmosphere, and inspired me with a feeling like that of sea-sickness.

Had we taken in with us two or three hundred Fellahs, and disposed them in long lines down the aisles with torches in their hands, we might possibly have formed a tolerable conception of those stupendous hypogæa. As it was, our few small lights suggested the idea of glow-worms moving in darkness through infinite space.

What inspired the Egyptians with a fondness for such localities, it is hard to say. There was certainly something sublime in their habit of mind; but then it is equally clear, that when

they visited these subterraneous tombs, the air could not have been so offensive or pestiferous as it is at present. The change was evidently brought about by some accidental conflagration, which might at any moment be repeated, for in all the vaults and chambers of the interior, linen, cotton, palm-leaves, dry as tinder, are profusely scattered on all sides, ready to be ignited by the first chance spark that may fall among them. In this case, the whole would instantaneously be in a blaze, and the effluvia issuing from such a mass, with innumerable mummies of men, women and crocodiles, broiling, seething and frying in a confined space, may, perhaps, be more easily imagined than described. Escape would be impossible. Every soul in the cavern would be overtaken by immediate death, and it would then, perhaps, be centuries before the people of Maābdè would again resume courage to act as guides.

Here and there the bodies of those who had fallen in the attempt to explore the place present themselves as startling mementos to future travellers. Vere, as we crawled along, put his hand on the face of one of these victims. The bats were innumerable, and striking against us in their flight, attempted to crawl down our breasts, or up under our Fez caps. I once or twice put the point of my thumb or finger into the mouths of those which had fallen to the earth, for I should observe that the passage at length contracted, and became so

low, that we were forced to creep along on our hands and knees.

While I was pleasing myself with the idea that I should soon be in the adyton, where in the midst of crocodiles red-haired girls were sacrificed to Typhon, I felt suddenly a strange swelling of the heart, like that which in some circumstances is said to precede death; my breathing became obstructed, and darkness came over my eyes, so that I could not clearly distinguish the candle I carried in one of my own hands. Vere, to whom I mentioned this, intreated me to return, and to take along with me one of the Arabs as a guide. In conformity with this advice, I suffered him and Suliman to pass, and after sitting down for a moment, crawled back rapidly till I gained the perpendicular.

But though the power of vision now returned, the power of thought did not return along with it. I was bewildered, stupefied, so that I knew not my right hand from my left; and if the Arab who accompanied me had been in the same predicament, we must both have perished. In this state of mind the passages, corridors, aisles, and galleries, seemed to have been infinitely multiplied, as well as the distance we had to traverse. Several times my companion confessed he did not exactly know his way. As we were both gasping, however, for a mouthful of fresh air, and contending with a feeling of inexpressible loathing, —for nothing subdues me so rapidly and so com-

pletely as stench,—we at length discerned a ray of light, and felt the inrushing of the external air with a delight not to be expressed.

On reaching the mouth the guide threw himself on the sand, while I sat in a state of stupor for nearly half-an-hour. Some time after our friends returned, bringing along with them mummies of crocodiles. They were covered with dirt, soot, and sweat, but did not appear to have suffered particularly from the effects of malaria. This I thought extraordinary, for Suliman was subject to difficulty of breathing, and in no other case had Vere been able to compete with me in the endurance of fatigue, heat, or impure air. I have, however, always found myself unable to sustain the effects of nauseous smells, probably more hostile to the vital principle in some men than in others.

The Arabs now volunteered to enter a second time to bring out other mummies, among which was one of a red-haired girl, unquestionably the most hideous relic of mortality I ever beheld. It was naked to the waist, the stomach and abdomen were pitted in, the skin was black, and the head, loosened by time, shook in the socket, and turned round, trembling and grinning, at the least motion. My disgust and horror combined to inspire me with regret for having thus rifled the tomb. I could not take the fearful mummy along with me into my boat, the Arabs refused to restore it to its resting-place, and, therefore, not knowing what

better to do, I laid it gently on the sand of the desert, where, if the thing were practicable, it was devoured by the half-famished hyænas, to which nothing that can possibly be eaten comes amiss.

I have often since then been haunted by the image of that girl, who had slumbered quietly in her tomb for two thousand years, till disturbed by my Frankish curiosity. How I came to yield to this morbid sentiment is more than I can explain, since, on all other occasions, I had resisted its influence. Possibly the wish to possess a red-haired mummy, remembering, as I did, the tradition that such persons were habitually sacrificed to the principle of evil, overcame my better feelings.

When I had somewhat recovered, the Arabs took up the crocodiles, and putting them on their heads, marched towards the boats. We now formed altogether a ludicrous procession,—Vere, in his European garb, tall, thin, and grim, looking like Don Quixote Redivivus; myself in my Turkish costume and Mograbin burnoose, and the Fellahs, with blue shirt and red cap, bearing along specimens of the gods of Egypt, enveloped in palm-branches and rotten linen bandages, exhaling as they went along the odour of Pandemonium. Even the specimens of black stalactite, which we took away with us as relics of the cavern, stank so abominably, that, though wrapped up in many substances, we could not endure them in our cabins, but were forced to place the box containing them outside.

XX.

One evening, in the neighbourhood of a village, I witnessed a scene which Homer would have dwelt upon with peculiar pleasure, and rendered epic by a few touches of the pen. The husbandmen were returning from the labours of the field, and there was in every countenance a look of thankfulness and contentment infinitely pleasing to behold. The men with antique turbans, and "bearded like the pard," walked in an upright and stately manner, looking about proudly on the rich glebe they had been tilling. Their wives and daughters, with all the gentleness and modesty of Arab women, walked by their side, some with children in their hands, others with babies at their breasts, or mounted merrily on their shoulders; while the boys big enough to sport the blue shirt and red tarboosh were perched on the backs of buffaloes, which, somewhat weary, like their masters, proceeded, filled with pleasant anticipations of hay and straw, towards their comfortable stalls.

As the children of Ishmael abhor silence as much as the ancient Egyptians loved it, there was a loud buzz throughout the group. The women looking up cheerfully in their husbands' faces, amused them with lively gossip, while the more taciturn lords of the creation, unable to keep pace with their eloquence, rewarded the delighted narrators from time to time with an affectionate smile,

accompanied by the gratified expression, "Very good, very good."

Here and there were beautiful ponds of water, mimosa copses, and palm-groves, and the sun, just then about to set behind the Libyan desert, threw his warm crimson light over the scene, imparting to the whole an air of marvellous beauty, which no language of mine could recal.

XXI.

If one be remarkable for any quality, good or bad, it is sure, by means not easily to be comprehended, to become widely known to the people among whom one travels. Of this I obtained many proofs in Egypt. One of my own peculiarities, originating, for aught I know, in pedantry, or in schoolboy hallucinations, is a strong partiality for the Greeks; and this fancy of mine constituted, it seems, a topic of conversation to numerous persons who had never seen me. They explained it, no doubt, after their own way, for the Arabs are an ingenious people; but some days before we reached Upper Egypt, it procured for me the company of a stranger whose society was beyond measure distasteful to Vere.

Early in the morning, as I was putting off from the eastern bank, under which we had lain moored all night, a tall, handsome man, dressed elegantly in the Muslim costume, rushed wildly up, and

entreated me, for the sake of God, to let him take refuge in my boat. He was closely pursued, he said, by a number of persons, who intended to take away his life. Without reflecting on the prudence or imprudence of the proceeding, I desired him to come on board, on which he seized both my hands, and kissed them with greater demonstrations of gratitude and enthusiasm than were natural to a Turk, or even an Arab. When I requested him to explain his situation, he desired me to push out into the middle of the stream, when he would comply, he said, with my wishes. This he did, bit by bit, and at first with extreme reluctance, but afterwards, as we became better acquainted, he seemed to lay aside all reserve, and displayed a frankness which might, with some reason, have made me uneasy at having such a person on board.

I shall not follow the order of his piecemeal revelations, which, however, as they came to me in detached glimpses, now a little and then a little, were extremely exciting, especially since they involved me in no inconsiderable danger.

My suppliant, if I might rely on the account he gave of himself, was the son of an Osmanli of distinction by a Greek mother, which was the circumstance, he observed, that had led him to claim protection from me. Adopting at an early age the military profession, he came to Egypt, where he gained the friendship of a pasha in whose house he resided.

But in the East, as in the West, all ties, all restraint, all considerations of honour, probity, and prudence, sometimes give way before the force of passion. This young man, whose name was Mustapha, furnished a striking example of this.

"I had risen so much," he said, "in the favour of my lord the Pasha, that he at length promised me one of his daughters in marriage, as soon as she should become nubile. Meanwhile he treated me as his son. I was the master of my own time, and, except his harīm, everything he possessed I might certainly have called mine.

"In this way the foundation seemed to be laid for a life of gratitude and happiness. But who can control his destiny? It was written that I should commit a great crime, that one offence should follow another, that I should become a fugitive and an exile, and owe my life to the generosity of a stranger.

"In the country palace of the Pasha were innumerable beautiful apartments, opening upon gardens laid out in the most tasteful manner. Here I frequently walked early in the morning, musing sometimes on the munificence of my friend, sometimes on the concealed beauties of his daughter, whom he destined for me. Occasionally I blamed him for keeping her from my sight. Child though she be, thought I, it would be better for me to become acquainted with her character, and that she should be gradually familiarized to my mind.

I thought, also, that she might like to see her future husband; but invariably concluded by checking and reprehending my own presumption, adding that God was great, and would, in time, render me happy, if it was his will.

"I have said already that the gardens of my patron were laid out with taste and elegance, with bowers, and arbours, and covered walks, into which the sun never penetrated, so dense and compact was the foliage. The pomegranate and the banana, the sifsaf and the sant, the tamarisk and the willow, and the citron and the orange, and the almond-tree and the henna, met the eyes on all sides, each flowering after the other, and presenting throughout the whole year a succession of bloom and pleasant verdure to the eye.

"Water, too, was there in abundance; in some places running through narrow channels of stone, bordered with flowers; elsewhere spreading into ponds and lakes covered with the blue lily and the lotus, and alighted upon from time to time by flights of aquatic birds of rare and brilliant plumage. In this paradise I spent much of my time, dreaming of the future, and contriving dazzling schemes of ambition.

"While things were in this situation one of the nephews of the Pasha arrived from Stambúl; a young man with many good qualities, but violent, headstrong, and incapable of self-control. He was no sooner installed in the palace than the

demeanour of the Pasha towards me altered visibly. No more was said of my becoming the son-in-law of his highness. I sank in favour from day to day, and began to reflect on my condition, for it seemed probable I should soon have to go forth into the world with no other means of advancement than my sword.

"While these thoughts were passing through my mind, I met one morning, in an obscure part of the garden, a lady who informed me she was one of the Pasha's wives. She added that my name, history, and prospects, were well known to her; that she pitied me for the misfortunes which were about to overtake me; and that, owing to the generosity of her soul, she had resolved to share my calamities. This was enough. My brain was on fire; my duty and gratitude to the Pasha were forgotten, and it was resolved that, on the first favourable opportunity, we should effect our escape, and afterwards trust to fate for the means by which we were to live. She now contrived daily to admit me to the harīm, where I frequently spent many hours, sometimes in forgetfulness, sometimes in a paroxysm of self-reproaches for the facility with which I had been persuaded to forget the obligations I lay under to my friend.

"Nevertheless, the influence which the lady had over me by no means diminished, but, on the contrary, went on increasing. Our interviews were frequent, as well in the gardens as in the palace,

and yet we were never found together, and no evil consequences resulted to either of us from the circumstance. In this way fate lures men on to their destruction. I at length supposed that nothing would be easier than to carry off my mistress and retire with her to some distant country where we might spend the remainder of our days in peace, forgetting that we should both be without resources the moment we ceased to be supplied by the Pasha.

"However, our plan of flight was matured. We agreed to conceal ourselves at night-fall in the gardens, which, as soon as it should be dark, we were to leave by a small door opening into a wood. I had taken the precaution to have a horse and a mule in waiting, with a slave on whom I thought I could rely. Nothing now seemed wanting to our felicity but that we should be three days' journey on the road to Mekka, whither we had determined to proceed as pilgrims.

"At the hour fixed upon, we both repaired faithfully to the place appointed, where, in a low voice, we reiterated our vows of fidelity to each other, and reviewed our plan of flight. The lady had taken care to have about her many jewels, which it would, she said, be easy to sell as we went along, so that in this way we might provide for our subsistence till we reached Mekka. In the midst of our conference I was startled by a rustling in the bushes, of which I sought to discover the

cause, but without success. No person seemed to be near. There was not a footstep on the path, and not a branch or even a leaf again stirred. I had two loaded pistols at my girdle, together with a keen dagger, which would render me a match for any adversary."

As he uttered these words his eye glanced down over his athletic frame, and I said, it could not be doubted that in a hand-to-hand contest few men would be likely to have the advantage over him. He smiled a grim smile and resumed his narrative.

"As soon as the night had fairly set in, and when all the inmates of the palace seemed, in conformity with custom, to have retired to rest, we left our hiding-place, and, through dark and winding pathways, went towards the small doorway, which we opened, and passed out into the wood, where we began to congratulate each other on our good fortune. 'But,' says the Arab proverb, 'let not the bucket rejoice before it has escaped from the well.' We had not advanced many steps ere we both became sensible that there were other persons in the wood. I now drew my pistols, and desiring my companion to hold firmly by my skirts, advanced resolutely to face whatever might be there to oppose our passage. My heart, however, I confess, beat violently; I longed fiercely to grapple with some one, and, had I possessed the power, would have trampled out the lives of thousands to protect and bear off that woman.

In the midst of this perturbation a gentle thought came over me. I turned round and kissed her. It was our last kiss, for while my lips were still on hers I heard the report of a pistol, and in a moment afterwards a shriek from my mistress told me the ball had done its work. Letting go her hold of my pelisse, she fell on the ground, and as I stooped to raise her another pistol was discharged at me. Next moment several men rushed forward, and I had to defend myself. Drawing both my pistols at once, I fired into the thick of my enemies, some of whom appeared to fall, but others attempting to take me in flank, I was constrained to push on towards the edge of the wood. There a new assailant came upon me, whom I felled with a stroke of my dagger.

"He exclaimed,—'Miscreant, you have slain me!' and from the voice I knew him to be the Pasha's nephew. No further obstruction being offered, I effected my escape, covered, as you now see me, with dust and blood. I travelled all night, and towards morning crept into one of those chambers which the ancient Kafirs had hollowed out in the rock, where I remained until return of darkness, when I ventured into an Arab village in order to allay my hunger. Not knowing what course to take, and rendered desperate by misfortune, I described my situation to the Fellah, who informed me that two English gentlemen were proceeding up the river in their boats, in which

they might, perhaps, afford me an asylum. He added, there was one of them in the dress of the children of the prophet, who had come from Greece, and was said to be a great friend of the people of that country. 'But,' said he, 'they are now distant more than a day's journey, so that it would be extremely difficult for you to overtake them.' I was, however, escaping for my life, and possessed an energy unknown to the Fellah. I therefore pressed forward with desperate speed, and, as you know, reached your boat soon after day-light.'

When Vere was made acquainted with the particulars of this narrative, he entreated me to set the vagabond, as he termed him, on shore.

"If he gets a sight of your piastres, St. John," said he, "no doubt he will cut your throat. Your rascally Arabs, including Suliman, will assist him, and I shall have the satisfaction of performing the rest of the journey by myself, and cursing your folly."

Of Mustapha, however, I had no fear. Though fierce and, perhaps, sanguinary, his countenance by no means suggested to me the idea of a villain. He had large black eyes, an elevated forehead, a straight nose, and one of the handsomest mouths I ever saw, encircled, as it were, by a pair of delicate black moustachios, drooping on each side to the chin. Occasionally his face assumed a feminine expression singularly pleasing. He won, therefore, rapidly on my regard, and I determined to stand by him to the utmost of my

power. It would have been contrary to my nature to desert or fear such a man. We therefore became friends, and on reaching Gheneh my good feeling towards him was put somewhat severely to the test. Mustapha's wish was to proceed, in company with the pilgrims then collecting there from all parts of Africa, to Kosseir, where he could take ship for Jiddah, and thence beg his way to the holy city; for money, poor fellow, he had none.

But this purpose he could not effect without a passport, and the question therefore was, how to procure him one from the governor of the city.

Immediately on landing I proceeded to the house of this worthy functionary, and my friend Mustapha had no choice but to accompany me, though every step we took he ran the risk of being apprehended, in which case he would probably have been impaled alive. The force of mind, however, he displayed was wonderful. He walked boldly by my side, entered with me the house of the governor, and sat unabashed in his presence. Imitating the example of Odysseus, I informed his honour that this was a friend of mine desirous of proceeding on pilgrimage to Mekka, and that I should consider myself under great obligations if he would give him the necessary passport. To my dismay, as well as that of Mustapha, he related briefly the circumstances which the latter had recounted to me in full, and said he hoped this was not the person who had broken into the harīm of Hassan

Pasha, and murdered his nephew in effecting his escape. I replied to the worthy Muslim, that, of course, he only said this by way of jest, since he could not possibly entertain such an idea of a person so respectable as my friend.

He answered, he did not; but that it was nevertheless very remarkable that the description which had been sent him should suit my companion so exactly. I observed, his experience must long ago have taught him that such coincidences were not uncommon. I then added, that if what I asked was too great a favour to be granted, my friend would change his route, and proceed with me to the Black-countries, but that, of course, I should complain to Mohammed Ali on my return of the extreme want of civility shown me by the governor of Gheneh. We then rose to leave the room, but the Turk, in a somewhat coaxing tone, desired us to be seated, observing that the passport should be made out immediately.

I contrived during this dialogue to steal a glance at Mustapha's face, which, in spite of his courage and self-command, was growing every moment visibly paler. To recal him to himself I observed to him that all would be right, and then added aloud, that I envied him greatly his journey to Mekka, as it would have delighted me also to see the Holy City. Upon this the governor offered to give me a passport too, which I declined, with many expressions of thanks.

The time consumed in making out the document seemed an age; but at length it was completed, and we quitted the apartment both much delighted; but in Mustapha's case, the joy, I suppose, was like that of a captive escaping from sentence of death. He returned with me to the boat, where I begged his acceptance of a small purse of piastres, to assist him on his way. At parting he shook hands with me, and shed tears; and when he had walked away some fifty or sixty yards, came running back to say he recollected he had in his bosom a little white handkerchief embroidered by his sister with gold, which I must not refuse to accept as a small token of his gratitude. So saying he pulled it forth and placed it in my hands, and then, giving me once more the earnest grasp of friendship, walked hastily off, and was soon lost among the houses of Gheneh. I have the little embroidered handkerchief still, and preserve it as a memento of this fiery Mohammedan, whose ultimate fate I shall probably never learn.

XXII.

It is curious to observe the war of scorn and contempt carried on between different classes of mankind. The aristocrat despises the man of moderate fortune; the man of moderate fortune despises the artisan and the peasant; and the emperor and king despise everybody but themselves,

and, compelled by the consciousness of demerit, themselves also very frequently. The Christian and the philosopher despise no one. They perceive, indeed, that according to the theories of the world there is a great deal to scorn and contemn among mankind, especially where concentrated selfishness is suffered to choke up the sources of sympathy.

But we are governed irresistibly by fictions. In our schools we assert and maintain that virtue is the only true nobility, while practically in the world we teach the direct contrary. Here respect is supposed to be due, not to virtue, but to rank, title, property; and we impose on ourselves so far as to imagine that nature at length condescends to humour our caprices and to produce and perpetuate castes, distinguished by I know not what physical and intellectual marks from each other.

This philosophy prevails very generally among the fabricators of fiction, who attribute to the privileged classes small heads, small hands and feet, and altogether a more delicate organization than falls to the lot of other orders of society; and this, of course, in the teeth of universal experience. India is the true paradise of this system. There the ragged Brahman, houseless, half-famished, and compelled through poverty to remain in ignorance, walks about nevertheless enveloped in the pride of caste, and scorning all around him who are unable to trace their descent from the same lineage. He

consents, nevertheless, when hunger pinches, to become a cook in the kitchen of a Sudra, who may happen, through genius or intelligence, to have risen to power. But in the midst of his pots and kettles the sacerdotal vagabond looks down upon the prince for whom he makes soups and ragouts, and, what is far more surprising, the prince himself admits his innate superiority.

In Europe these ideas have lost much of their force, but social and political superstition is still very far from having given way before the light of philosophy. The possessor of a title, for example, obviously believes himself superior to his untitled neighbours, who, strange to say, also admit the fact, and look up to him with mysterious reverence. There is no accounting for this weakness, often found lurking in the midst of philosophical and political theories, with which it has no natural connexion. But with a high state of civilization it is incompatible. It is a relic of the inheritance we originally brought with us from the woods, and no man can say he has totally obliterated the savage from his nature, who suffers the pride of caste or race to stain the purity of his soul.

I have upon the whole a prejudice against the Turks, and this, during my stay in Egypt, was rather increased than diminished by observing how savagely they domineer over the Arabs, for whom, as an oppressed people, I had the strongest sympathy. But God forbid that this should render

me unjust! In all nations you find examples of generosity, kindness, and above all, of the domestic affections; and of course the Osmanlis of both sexes feel and suffer very much like other people.

XXIII.

One night at Minieh,—or rather, I should say one evening, for there was still a flush of pale light gleaming over the city from the west—a little girl, probably about eleven or twelve years of age, came to my boat, addressed me as the prince of physicians, and conjured me for the love of God to go with her and cure a beloved child, which, according to her account, lay dangerously ill.

Vere, who entertained a highly unfavourable idea of the Egyptians, advised me to refuse, and even Suliman, upon hearing that no one was to accompany me from the boats, thought it would be hardly safe to venture, notwithstanding the girl's innocent looks and fearlessness of manner. But considering the delicate and gentle creature from head to foot, I could not doubt her perfect harmlessness, or imagine she was employed to lead me into danger.

Taking a few simple medicines with me, therefore, I bade her lead the way: she struck immediately into a narrow street, where, in spite of the early hour, we met not a living thing, except a

few of those wild dogs usually found prowling about eastern cities at night. I had taken the precaution to bring with me my pistols, a dagger, and a stout stick, so that I apprehended nothing from these four-footed marauders, though they always attack strangers, and have sometimes torn them to pieces. The little girl passed rapidly on, turning, winding, and threading the most intricate thoroughfares, apparently without the slightest timidity or hesitation.

The streets being completely covered above, it became at length so dark that I was obliged to ask my little friend to take me by the hand. For her part she seemed to be endowed with the power to see without light.

> "Virtue can see to do what virtue would
> By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
> Were in the flat sea sunk."

Here and there in recesses and door-ways I heard, occasionally, the voices of men and women conversing in whispers, and perceived lights gleaming through what appeared to be apertures in the wall. But we experienced no obstruction till we reached a great gate dividing one quarter of the city from another. Upon a word from my companion, however, we were suffered to pass, and in about a quarter of an hour arrived at an open space where there was a house with two dim lamps burning over the entrance. This was by a flight of steps leading under an arch to a large door;

covered with plates of brass engraved with sentences from the Koran. My guide knocked gently, and we were admitted by a black slave, with a terra-cotta antique lamp in her hand. Uttering the beautiful words, "Peace be with you," she preceded us through several gloomy corridors and passages, till we reached a spacious apartment with a sort of bed in a recess, likewise very imperfectly lighted. Here I found the child, a beautiful boy, delicately covered up.

Little skilled in the diagnosis of disease, and only practising from necessity, or rather out of a willingness to please the natives, I may probably have underrated my patient's danger. I felt his pulse; I waked him and looked at his tongue, and told the slave he would be perfectly well in the morning. Meanwhile I could not help being struck by the curious picture we at that moment presented; the black slave at my left holding forward the light over the bed; on the right my young guide, whom I now perceived to have a countenance of singular beauty. Her face was fair, her eyes black, and her figure that of an innubile Madonna. Africa, I thought to myself, never gave her birth; she must have come from those regions in the vicinity of Caucasus which to the Turkish empire have always been the nursery of female slaves.

But this was not the time for inquiry. Besides, the infant in the bed, covered with embroidered

shawls, and silks, and fine linen, was an object of still greater interest. I have seldom seen so lovely a child. Though old enough to perceive I was a stranger, he did not scream or appear terrified, yet I noticed an uneasy wandering of the eyes, as if he missed some face he had been used to behold on waking. I inquired of the black slave how it happened that, being ill, the child was left thus alone? She cast down her eyes, but made no reply. The little boy by this time had caught hold of one of my fingers and pulled it towards his mouth.

I beg pardon of all my readers who are not fathers for dwelling on details like these, especially when I add that this simple, familiar circumstance, which recalled other days and other lands to mind, affected me so much that I found it impossible to conceal my emotion. Stooping down, I kissed the child, and I think a tear or two dropped on its innocent face. I have a singular aptitude, and I pride myself on it exceedingly, for making the acquaintance of such little people, who always seem to love me much better than their elders. This infant Turk, reminded, perhaps, of his father by my long black beard and swarthy physiognomy, opened his arms as I bent over him and clasped me round the neck. I fear it is a foolish weakness, but I do devoutly love human nature at that age, and felt at the moment that I could have taken that pretty boy to my heart and carried him round the earth with me.

Grown-up persons are taught by the world, that stern and pitiless teacher, to distrust each other; but infancy is confiding. Its instincts are all pure, because its nature is all holy. God has not yet handed it over exclusively to man. Fresh from the heaven of its mother's bosom, it has not lost its celestial affections, but yearns with sympathy towards everything which puts on a look of kindness.

The reader will, I trust, require no assurance from me that I meant nothing beyond the indulgence of my feelings by fraternizing with the little Muslim. It produced, however, a startling effect. From behind a curtain at the bed's head a lady now stepped forward, and, in a tone of earnest gratitude, thanked me for the interest I took in her child.

"He will not die," said she, "will he?"

"On the contrary, madam," I replied, "he will be perfectly well by to-morrow morning."

Religion, manners, custom, effect a great deal in modifying and metamorphosing our species; but there are feelings which they sometimes fail to subdue, and among these is a mother's love. Before me stood a woman who had never till then, perhaps, beheld a stranger face to face, who in ordinary circumstances would have considered it highly immodest to appear in my presence unveiled, or even to speak to me; yet now, in the fulness of her heart, and the joy with which it was running

over, she forgot everything, and like an European woman held out her hand to me. I took it in the sense in which it was offered. Her eyes were full, her voice was choked, and throwing herself on the bed, she clasped her child in her arms, and sobbed with delight.

When she had recovered herself, I administered the medicine, and kissing my little patient once more, was about to retire, when she exclaimed,—

"No; that must not be. Go," said she, addressing herself to the youthful slave, "and bring hither the Effendi."

She then desired me to sit down on the divan, but as she herself remained standing, I also continued where I was. In a minute or two my Osmanli host entered, and a more thorough gentleman I have never seen. He was probably about thirty, and for his wife, whose years could not exceed seventeen, seemed to entertain much the same feeling with which she regarded the child; that is to say, a species of idolatry not uncommon in the East, any more than in other parts of the world.

On learning what I had done and said, he made use of many Oriental phrases, which, put together, signified that he was extremely grateful. We then sat down on the divan, where we had pipes, coffee, and sherbet brought to us. The presence of the wife was an extraordinary relaxation of the severity of Eastern manners, only to be accounted

for by the peculiar relation in which, for the moment, we stood to each other. Though I had in reality done nothing, I seemed to have performed wonders. But love sanctifies and aggrandises whatever it touches, and these worthy people, in the true spirit of charity, took, I suppose, the will for the deed. Even before I left, their little boy appeared to be perfectly recovered, and sank into a sweet sleep. This they attributed to my wonderful skill, and no assurances of mine could disabuse them, so I accepted their gratitude, though I firmly refused the presents which they wished to force upon me.

When at length I rose to depart, the slave-girl, who had remained in the room all the while, stepped forward to conduct me. This, however, the father would not allow. He said he would himself take me back to the boat, unless I would consent to become his guest for the night, which I should have done with the greatest pleasure, but that I knew Suliman and Vere would suspect me to be murdered, and feel extremely uneasy. At parting I again touched hands with the young mother, who, I trust, is still happy, and as fond and proud as ever of her son, who, if his manhood resemble his infancy, must be one of the handsomest men in Egypt.

Next morning news was brought me that my infant patient was perfectly recovered, and along with this intelligence came a quantity of beautiful

dates, which I could not refuse, with a warm and earnest invitation to pass some days with the family on my return down the river. But I never saw them again. It is, in fact, one of the regrets of a traveller, that the friendships he makes, like certain roses of antiquity, often bloom in an hour, and fade in less.

XXIV.

I may as well mention here another instance of my medical experience in Egypt. Early one spring morning our boats lay moored close to the foot of the Arabian mountains, in a most romantic bend of the river. To the north of us stretched a sharp headland, covered thickly with wood, which, extending to the very edge of the bank, hung in delicate feathery masses over the water. Towards the south the country consisted of a succession of corn-fields interspersed with date-palms; on the west, beyond the Nile, lay a plain of varied cultivation, studded with groves and hamlets, and bordered by the desert.

I was standing on the deck, admiring the prospect over which in a few minutes the sun would diffuse its light, when I saw a young woman, in the Arab costume, approaching hastily from behind the skirts of the wood. Stopping when within three paces of the boat, she entreated me to land and accompany her home. Her whole air and

countenance indicated deep sorrow, and the tones of her voice were among the most melancholy I ever heard. Without waiting for any further explanation I jumped ashore, when she informed me her husband was so ill that he appeared to be dying, and that she was sure I could cure him if I would.

"And if you do restore him to me," said she, "the gratitude of a Muslim woman and the blessing of God will be with you wherever you go."

I told her the power of life and death was not in my hands, but that if it pleased God I would restore her husband's health. She replied, she was sure I could save him if I pleased, for that the children of the Franks possessed all of them miraculous wisdom, but especially those who addicted themselves to medicine; that they knew all the properties of plants and minerals, and by their spells and talismans, and command over the powers of nature, could destroy life in an instant, or prolong it indefinitely.

I was extremely pained to hear her give utterance to such opinions, which made it clear to me, that if I failed to prove of service to her husband, she would attribute it to my hardness of heart, or, perhaps, to the circumstance of my being an unbeliever. When we arrived at her dwelling, I found my patient stretched on a low bed, in the last stage of consumption. His cheeks were pale and hollow, his eyes glittering with an unnatural

brightness, his voice was feeble, and the recurrence of the cough almost perpetual. My only wonder was that he had lived so long, for in addition to what he suffered from the disease, his unfortunate wife, under the impression that the external air was injurious, had carefully closed up every window, aperture, and cranny through which the breath of heaven might have found its way in, and had hung, besides, a thick mat before the doorway, so that the atmosphere of the apartment was like that of an oven, and extremely noisome besides.

Use had reconciled her to this dreadful den, but finding it impossible to breathe, I requested her permission to remove the mat, and got her, besides, to open the windows, and let in a quantity of fresh air. The sick man looked at her affectionately, said he felt refreshed, and added, he had all along been persuaded that it would be better to keep the door and windows open. Such, however, was not the opinion prevalent in the country, nor was it, I believe, with us, in former times.

It seemed clear to me he had not many weeks to live, and the wife's existence appeared bound up in his. Let every man speak of the Orientals as he finds them, and if there are those who have observed among the Arabs nothing but selfishness, voluptuousness, and debauchery, it is for them to speak according to their experience. Mine was very different. Here was a woman, humble, ignorant, of extremely limited vocabulary, and a

Mohammedan besides, whose love, I am persuaded, was as pure and noble as that of the most refined woman in Christendom. With what earnestness did she watch my looks, as I questioned her husband and examined his case; her life seemed for the moment to hang on the expression of my countenance! I gave him something to assuage his sufferings; to cure him was past my power, and, indeed, that of any other man.

When I left the room, with as many words of comfort as I could possibly give, the wife followed me out, and taking both my hands in hers, entreated and conjured me, with a look of earnest supplication, such as a pagan woman might have directed to some god, to save the object of her love.

"Is he to live, O stranger?" said she, "only say, Yes; you can save him if you will, I know you can. God has granted you that power, and will you not exert it to preserve me from the lowest depth of human suffering?"

I replied in the language of her own religion,— "God is great! He can do all things. He can restore to you your husband, if he pleases, but for me, I can only employ those humble means which He has placed at my disposal."

But she still held my hands, and would not let me go.

"Promise me," said she, "promise me, O stranger, that he will recover. Say it, and I will believe

you, and my heart shall be joyful, and my dearest blessing shall go over the world with you. If you have a wife, I conjure you by her name and by the names of your children, to save my husband."

I was deeply moved, and wished from the bottom of my soul it had been in my power to give her comfort.

"Who knows," said I, "what may happen? Come with me to the boat. I will give you medicines, which you will, I am sure, administer carefully. Keep his room airy and cool; sprinkle, from time to time, a little fresh rose-water over the floor, and he may, indeed I hope he will, recover."

At these words she gazed eagerly in my face, into which I threw as comfortable a look as possible, and then, drying her tears, and half smiling, she went along with me to receive the medicines which, in her opinion, were to work a miracle. God only knows what became of the poor Arab, but many a grandee in the civilized world would give all he possessed, and, perhaps, even his life itself, to be loved as he was.

XXV.

Properly speaking, we only reached the region of antiquities when we entered upon the plain of Denderah, with its doum-palms and unrivalled temple. Now then, at length, I was truly in the land of Isis, and the goddess, in all her majesty

and beauty, seemed to lie invisibly there to receive me. We quitted our boats early in the morning, and mounting on donkeys, turned our faces towards the ruins which stand on what may be called the neutral ground between the desert and the valley. A number of Arab girls, proceeding on I know not what errand from one village to another, met us as we crossed the plain, and in the expectation, probably, of receiving a present, which they consider it the duty of all travellers to make, joined our party, and insisted on visiting the fane of Athor in our company. Though somewhat too slight, several of them were very pretty, and their liveliness and good humour contributed greatly to our amusement.

I am, where the works of man are concerned, somewhat, perhaps, too little addicted to admiration. Not that I grudge to artist or architect the praise due to him, but that in most cases the craving of my mind after the beautiful is unsatisfied. Still the temple of Denderah, with its lofty magnificent portico, looking, at a distance, like a forest of mighty columns, rising behind each other in dense shadow, for the moment filled my imagination. As I drew nearer, too, the grand architrave sculptured with gods and goddesses, the projecting cornice elaborately adorned, the profusion of bassi relievi, intaglios, and hieroglyphics, and the superb portal leading into the body of the edifice, which, through the prevailing obscurity, seemed intermi-

nable, greatly strengthened the impression made by the first aspect of the ruins.

It has been only slowly, and with a reluctance for which I can with difficulty account, that I have been led to admit the claims in full of the ancient Egyptians to our respect and admiration. The quaintness of their ideas, the absence of beauty from their art, constantly offended my fancy when on the spot, and it is only by losing sight of this defect, and directing my attention to other qualities in the remains bequeathed to us by their genius, that I have come at length to appreciate their sculpture, painting, and architecture. Still, what was greatest and most wonderful among them as a people, was that philosophy which they endeavoured to develop symbolically in their sacred structures.

On the roof of the portico at Denderah we discover traces, imperfect and obscure, of the mode in which they explained to themselves the mystery of life and death. Far out in the regions of space, encircled by planets and constellations, we behold the fabricator of the universe, darting his prolific rays towards Athor, who therewith becomes impregnated, and extending her beautiful form into a circle, embracing heaven and earth, gives birth to the world. Sometimes her body assumes the form of a crescent, sometimes it represents three sides of a square, illuminated and rendered fertile by rays of living light, and the process of gestation being completed, the world springs into being like

an infant, or is breathed forth into space like the embodiment of a word.

I have called the goddess of this temple Athor, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, but in the mystical theology of the Egyptians, this divinity was only another form of Isis, who, contemplated in various lights, was the mother, nurse, preserver, and restorer of all things, in conjunction with Phthah, Ammon, or Osiris. In this system the deity was regarded as of a dual nature, active and passive, masculine and feminine. Probably in the original conception, mind was signified by the one, and matter by the other.

An obscurity almost impenetrable envelops the basis of the Egyptian religion, which would seem to have been the belief that the universe, infinite and eternal, contains necessarily within itself productive, formative, and dissolving forces, which, operating in a never-ending circle, combining, mingling, adhering, separating, give birth to all the phenomena on which we bestow the name of existence.

In this elevated region of speculation moral ideas had no place. They have reference exclusively to us, to our mutual relations, to our ill or well-being. In the attempt, therefore, to open a way to the understanding, for truths physical or metaphysical, the Egyptian philosophers perceived no objection to illustrate their meaning by referring to the mode in which the vital forces are still distributed through

the universe. All, according to their theory, is God; who, therefore, in a philosophical point of view, is the sole agent in all processes; from which they would seem to have educed the belief in the most absolute fatality.

But ascending one step in the ladder of existence, we find that the two-fold power of nature has given birth to a number of secondary powers, which theology embodied in symbolical existences, and distinguished by separate names and attributes. Throughout the universe there is a spirit which, through innumerable metamorphoses, causes its presence to be felt in forms of beauty, brightness, softness, gentleness, inspiring joy, admiration, desire, love. On this modification of the deity they bestowed the name of Athor, and symbolized it by whatever suggests an idea of the passive principle, disposed, by its form and nature, to be the recipient of the vital forces.

But there is a generation more subtle and refined than that which, in some of its accidents, comes under the cognisance of the senses. I mean the operation by which, in the womb of intellect, ideas are engendered and multiplied, the one from another, in an infinite series. Over this process, by which the invisible world is peopled, the goddess Neith presided, as Athor presided over whatever was connected with the production of living, material beings; and as this goddess is mild, bright, and beautiful, representing the state of mind in which

the principle of life uncloses its wings, and flies from form to form, so the goddess to whom thought and ideas owe their origin is sedate, tranquil, severe, uninfluenced by passion, and invested for ever with that serene light which beams upon her from the original source of existence.

As we have here, however, no abiding place, as our bodies, our passions, our fears, and joys, and hopes, make themselves wings, and fly we know not whither, the Egyptians imagined a region, where whatever had enjoyed a fleeting existence on earth passed, when its turbulent action had subsided, and put on the forms of everlasting life. This was the true home of the soul, after which it had longed and striven during its earthly career. Here the loved and lost were found again; here the mother clasped to her arms the infant which had seemed to perish in her earthly embrace; here the husband was joined in eternal union with his beloved wife; here children found again the parents whose eyes they had closed, and of whom they had thought they had taken leave for ever; here the noble and the good received the reward of their piety and virtue; and over this state of beatitude the goddess who brings joy out of sorrow, beauty out of deformity, life out of death,—Isis, in one word, reigned supreme.

But who does not perceive that Athor, Neith, and Isis, are one and the same divinity, contemplated in a triple character? When watching over

the transmission of the vital fire, she is called Athor; when causing the illumination of the soul, she is Neith; and ultimately, when, by a sort of second birth, death is changed into life, the fleeting into the permanent, or, when the sun, which had seemed to set, is, after a long night, sent revolving back to produce another dawn, Isis, as the mother of all that exists in spirit or in matter, may be said, through one of her eternally renewed birth-pangs, to be ushering a soul into bliss, or delivering it over a second time to run the career of vicissitude which we denominate life.

The masculine divinities corresponding with Athor and Isis may be said to have their functions expressed in those of their partners. The Egyptians, however, were not thus satisfied. Everywhere on the face of their ruins we discover proofs of the veneration in which they held the active principle, which they were never weary of reproducing with its symbols, that in India also, and in old Hellas, received the worship of the people. On the walls of the temple at Denderah we behold innumerable representations illustrative of this fact. But our ethical ideas are inimical to the pursuit of such investigations, unless enveloped in the mantle of an obscure terminology, which, if it did not impair their truth, would certainly, by the creation of unnecessary obstacles and impediments, very much diminish their utility.

XXVI.

If the old Egyptians are dead they have still successors in the valley, who, though ignorant of their civil polity, unversed in their philosophy, and profoundly despising their religion, imitate their manners, and worship quite as devoutly at the shrine of Athor. Our Arab companions, male and female, looked for some time, with curiosity and patience, at our proceedings, our examination of the walls of dark rooms by the light of lamps and tapers, our minute measurements, our sketching, our note-taking; but, growing weary by degrees, they would all have taken to flight had we not been seized with a paroxysm of hospitality and invited them to taste of our salt; in other words, to dine with us.

Our provisions were borne aloft to the roof of the temple, where, in a half-ruined chamber, protecting us completely from the sun, while it commanded a magnificent view of the plain and the Libyan mountains, we sat down on fragments of gods and goddesses, bulls, goats, and warriors, and enjoyed ourselves after our fashion. Suliman, a provident and judicious person, had evidently calculated upon a certain amount of female society, and therefore brought along with him biscuits and sweetmeats, with delicious sherbet, and as many solids as a much larger assemblage would have required.

Our guests, therefore, who sat modestly in a little circle apart, were entertained in a style which I have no doubt they thought very sumptuous, as they were profuse in their thanks, and apparently also in their enjoyment. They laughed and talked with singular volubility; they hummed snatches of songs, and almost seemed to fancy they had been invited to a ball.

In general Orientals affect a contempt for waiting on women; but Suliman and Abou-Zaid appeared to entertain no objection to perform this gentle service, but handed about the cakes, the biscuits, the beef, the cold pigeons, and the bowls of sherbet, with as much glee and alacrity as so many female slaves. When, in the Homeric phrase, the rage of hunger had been appeased, our guests got up, made their salaam, and left us, to proceed on their own affairs, into the nature of which we did not inquire.

After lunch we returned to the examination of the ruins; and, while standing before the southern end of the temple, heard, in the wall, a sound which must, we fancied, exactly resemble that emitted by the vocal statue when illuminated by the sun's first rays. The heat at the moment was intense; the sand under our feet, the stones, the wall, even our very clothing, being almost scorching to the touch; yet our admiration of the sculpture and the architecture would not suffer us to seek for shelter. We were gazing, I remember, on a

magnificent basso-relievo of Osiris, when a sound like that produced by the breaking of a mighty harp-string passed through the temple wall, vibrating from east to west, and ceasing in an instant. We listened, but there was no repetition. Was it the effect of heat upon the huge blocks of stone? I know not, but can think of no other explanation.

Having devoted the whole day to the study of the ruins, we began to think of returning to our boats, though reluctantly enough on my part. The scene was one of the most beautiful I had ever beheld in Egypt. As I paused upon the high mounds skirting the valley to take a look at the ruins, the still more striking grandeur of nature carried away my thoughts from them. The plain below, covered as far as the eye could reach with young sedge, bright green corn, villages embosomed in palm-woods, and, nearer at hand, with misshapen heaps of rubbish, was already assuming a dusky hue; but the summit of the Libyan mountains to the left, and the loftier range of the Arabian chain to the east, beyond the river, were enshrouded with a deep rose colour of inexpressible beauty, more particularly when beheld contrasted with the cerulean blue of the sky, and the dense shadow which had already gathered round their bases.

XXVII.

Friends sometimes quarrel, like lovers; for how could the current of any emotion continue flowing for a length of time without encountering any cross wind? Water, when it has been ruffled and subsided again, seems smoother than ever. It lies as if fatigued by the previous exertion, and hushes itself into extra quietude to make up for it. Exactly so is it with our feelings. They rush, and fume, and fret, against any untoward impediment; but when they have passed it, resume their gentleness and tranquillity, and seem all the better for having been disturbed.

Whether the case be so or not, on returning to our boats from Denderah, Vere and I had a dispute, which I dislike to call a quarrel, though it led to our temporary separation. He thought we had seen enough of the temple of Denderah. I wished to devote the following day to a second examination. We were probably both right; his object being to see as many things as possible in a short space of time; mine to penetrate, as far as I could by patient scrutiny, into the hidden meaning of what I saw. Being impatient, however, to reach Thebes, and the wind proving fair, he shook hands with me, and sailed away. I felt, I confess, much regret as I stood on the deck and saw his boat diminish by degrees, and at length disappear in the distance and darkness. I then retired to

my cabin to chronicle my feelings and sensations, which, at the moment, were none of the most agreeable.

Some hours later, as I lay smoking and thinking sadly of the past, Suliman entered the cabin to say that a traveller, descending the river from Nubia, would like, if I had no objection, to come and take tea with me. Of course, I was too happy; and when he came, I found him to be an English gentleman from Naples, engaged in the study of hieroglyphics, and full of mighty discoveries made, or to be made hereafter. I had with me an account of all that had been hitherto done in that branch of study, but could find nothing satisfactory. My visitor was more sanguine, and he believed that the world was about to be enlightened on the subject of its early history.

As we smoked and sipped our coffee, I by degrees contrived to turn the conversation into a different channel, when I found the worthy antiquarian to be full of stories and anecdotes which he had read or heard in the course of his long life. Some of these might have suited very well the pen of Giovanni Boccaccio, but would be altogether out of place in my narrative. The relater was a grave man, with sharp and sombre physiognomy, common-place in his ideas, sceptical where he should have believed, and credulous where he should have doubted. He was, in short, one of the class, very far from being a small one, com-

posed of men who think it bold and original to shock their neighbours by putting forward scientific conjectures as discoveries, and by affecting to despise ideas before which, in secret, they quail and shiver. Pretending to be inimical to superstition, they only thrust it from them with one hand to pull it back with the other.

As I have said, however, my visitor when put on the right track blossomed, as it were, into stories and anecdotes, one of which connected with the history of Southern Italy may be worth repeating.

XXVIII.

Many years ago, there lived a king of Naples, who, having married an extremely beautiful princess, and chosen a minister to conduct in his name the affairs of government, entirely gave himself up, as was proper, to his pleasures and amusements. He looked upon the people as a flock of sheep, and never busied himself about their welfare, unless in so far as his own interest might be concerned.

Like most other persons of that period, he experienced a strong passion for the chase, which, in common with Xenophon and many other writers, he denominated the image of war, and considered one of the best introductions to the art of governing men.

He was not, meanwhile, at all conscious that in the eyes of certain other persons he himself was

regarded as an animal to be hunted, or a beast to be ridden; that they converted his weakness, his folly, his ignorance, into a mine of wealth, and mounted invisibly on his shoulders, laughing immoderately all the while at his long-eared patience and stupidity.

Through their instrumentality he imported insolent mandates from a distance, for which he paid enormous sums of money; he hired men to make certain noises, by which they pretended to revoke the decisions of the past, to alter the complexion of the future, to change immorality into morality, or entirely to neutralize the laws by which the universe is regulated. While he was a slave to these, he considered himself wise, and was so reputed by others; but neither he nor they could foresee events, which were, nevertheless, speedily to happen, to the astonishment of the whole kingdom, and little to the credit of his majesty's character for sagacity.

There resided at his court a nobleman, whose opinions on most subjects differed wholly from his own. Having devoted his youth, beyond the precincts of which he had scarcely yet passed, to study, this singular courtier could hardly be said to have anything in common with the king or his associates, among whom he had been reluctantly thrown by the destiny of circumstances.

He supplied, however, a proof that the prejudice vulgarly cherished against the aptitude of studious men for action, did not, in his case, deserve to be

treated with the slightest respect. Learning had neither rendered him effeminate, nor weakened the legitimate force of his passions, nor misdirected his energies, nor inspired him, as it does so many others, with a contempt for the ordinary concerns of life. On the contrary, the free development of his understanding had rendered him a man complete in nearly all relations. He had taught himself to view things in their true light, and estimated all individuals around him exclusively by their moral worth, without any reference whatever to rank, honour, or position.

Such an individual was a marvel in those ages, and, indeed, would not be considered common in any age. There was, however, one great defect in his character—defect, I mean, in reference to his situation—having married a wife, young, handsome, and in every way suited to his taste, he would gladly, for her sake, have abandoned the world and lived in extreme seclusion, unmindful of his rank and the duties it was thought to impose upon him.

Indeed, as far as was practicable in a courtier, he did seclude himself with her, living in a castle in the country, where they kept a sort of little court of their own, filled with their relatives, friends, dependents, and domestics, suited more or less to the taste of the lord, whose name was Renato di Fidenza.

Bianca, his wife, seemed to have been created expressly to make him happy; contented with the

life she led, the wish never arose in her mind to visit the Court of Naples, which, though presided over by an estimable princess, was far too much tainted with the vices common in palaces to be suitable to the mental economy of the Countess di Fidenza.

As I have been often and often at the castle, now ruined and deserted, I may, perhaps, venture to indulge in a brief description of what it was in those days; which, however, will scarcely do justice to the beauties of the site and structure.

It stood on the slope of a lofty hill, or rather, I should perhaps say, of a mountain, and around it rich and extensive grounds, thickly interspersed with trees, watered by several rivulets, and green as an emerald, descended in wavy depressions to the edge of a small lake, beautified by several islands.

From the topmost turret, you could, in clear weather, obtain a glimpse of the blue sea, rolling away in brightness towards the south, and of valleys of great depth, which concealed in their bosoms small rivers overarched with dense foliage extending right and left from the lake, and suggesting to the imagination the idea of a country invested with all the beauty, quietude, and plenty of the golden age.

XXIX.

Of the charms and magnificence of his residence Renato never spoke at court, neither was he on any occasion known to allude to his wife, or to any point whatever connected with his domestic affairs: he conducted himself as in the place not of it, behaved towards women in general with courtesy, towards none with preference, and was, in all respects, a man elevated by his character far above his contemporaries in palace or city. But according to the belief of those times, there is a destiny which overrules our actions and makes our happiness or calamity its sport.

His prudence and reserve proved unavailing, for the courtiers, who had heard something of the beauty of Bianca, spoke of her so frequently to the king, that his curiosity was at length awakened, and after meditating for some time, he invented a stratagem suitable to his character, which he did not doubt would enable him to gratify it.

Without making the slightest allusion to the desire which possessed him to be introduced into Renato's castle, he once, while hunting, contrived to be separated from his companions and overtaken by the night in its neighbourhood. The Lord of Fidenza, in whose company this happened, could unfortunately do no less than invite him to his

dwelling, towards which, knowing the reckless and profligate character of his royal guest, he rode in extreme gloom and despondency. His heart had in this world but one treasure, and he now felt, in spite of the courage and proud confidence of his soul, that he was in imminent risk of losing it.

The king was a handsome man, and, though remarkable for his boisterous manners and coarse sentiments, could affect, when it suited him, a polished behaviour, which, backed by his rank and power, rarely failed to recommend him to the ladies of his kingdom.

Though vastly superior to him, therefore, in intellect, manners and person—for he excelled all his contemporaries in masculine beauty—Renato could not, as I have said, entirely banish those apprehensions which the visit of the king to his castle caused to spring up in his mind. No choice, however, was left him. The government of Naples was a despotism, and resistance to the regal authority by a subject altogether impracticable.

The king, who, among his boon companions, loved to be called by his own christian name, Roberto, paid, during supper, very marked attentions to the Lady Bianca, but she received them with a calm propriety and reserve which entirely reassured her husband's mind. He consequently murmured to himself:—

"Her virtue will triumph over his arts, and over the seductions and allurements of power.

Oh Bianca, why did I ever doubt thee? Why did a shadow of fear cast itself over my thoughts, while thou wert the subject of them?"

The repast ended, Roberto retired to rest, and next morning departed early, without so much as waiting to salute the lady of the castle before he left. Renato accompanied him, and by a sort of good chance which appeared very wonderful, they fell in with their companions, before they had ridden half an hour, and with them returned to Naples.

XXX.

Roberto, celebrated for the ingenuity of his devices, as well as for the baseness of his sentiments, contrived many pretexts for passing days and weeks at Fidenza, though it did not for some time appear that he had excited any particular interest in the mind of its fair mistress.

But a despot is master of his occasions and instruments. When his plan, therefore, appeared ripe for execution, Roberto despatched the Count to a distant part of the kingdom on public affairs; and immediately took advantage of the opportunity afforded by his absence, to complete the seduction of his wife.

Though led by experience to believe in the resistlessness of his powers of fascination, it was not without some instinctive misgiving that he

engaged in this enterprise. Pleasure is often but one bright link in a chain where all else is black. Indistinct apprehensions, presentiments of evil, unwelcome and painful forebodings, crowded irresistibly on his mind. In the character of the Lord of Fidenza, he had discovered peculiarities which perplexed him; gentleness of disposition united with indomitable will, immeasurable faith in those he loved, boundless contempt for those whom he despised, with many symptoms of the ill-disguised conviction of his own innate superiority to all around him.

What such a temper might in case of extreme provocation lead him to perpetrate his majesty could not exactly foresee, but while resolving to give a free rein to his appetites, he was unable to conceal from himself the possibility that he might, some day, be called upon to pay the penalty.

Accompanied by one trusty follower, bearing large quantities of gold and jewels, he repaired to Renato's castle, where he found a too easy welcome and hospitality.

Bianca, whom the noblest subject might have, perhaps, wooed in vain, felt dazzled and bewildered by the attentions of a king. She ordered, therefore, the most sumptuous banquet to be prepared, and was so completely transported out of herself, by what, in those times, was called the honour done to her, that she met the royal seducer more than half way, and demeaned herself with so little

modesty and delicacy, that the whole body of her attendants predicted her fall before it happened. Her manner to Roberto was less reserved, if possible, than towards her husband, and when she had consummated her guilt, instead of exhibiting remorse or shame, she ostentatiously decked herself with the royal jewels, and showed evident tokens of impatience at the very mention of Renato's name.

Roberto's visits were now constant, and, by the time her husband returned, the reputation of the Countess for infidelity had been established at the Neapolitan court. Renato, however, would not trust to rumour, but resolved, whatever anguish it might cost him, to investigate the truth of the report and judge for himself. He therefore returned secretly to Fidenza, and, having been admitted by a faithful servant, concealed himself in one of the turrets of the castle, till Roberto should pay his next visit to Bianca.

He then, through closets and passages long familiar to him, entered a small chamber overlooking the apartment in which they supped, where, in the behaviour of his wife, he saw enough to convince him of her utter worthlessness. He, nevertheless, determined not to trust, in a case of so much importance, to circumstances or appearances, and in order to place her guilt beyond all doubt, retreated hastily to her bed-chamber, where he hid himself to await the result.

In a short time his worst fears were verified.

The lady entered with the King, and so far from affecting secrecy, was shamelessly ushered into the apartment by her female attendants. Lamps were left burning on pedestals and in niches, and Renato remained in concealment till they both fell asleep.

In this dreadful interval his resolution had been formed. Drawing a small dagger from his girdle, he traversed the chamber and with its sharp edge cut off a lock of the King's hair, with another from the head of his wife, and making of them one packet, and taking up a small jewelled ornament which his royal guest had left carelessly on a table, he went out, closed the door after him, issued by a secret exit from the castle, and returned to Naples.

XXXI.

It was now observed that all Renato's habits and manners were changed. He never spoke of returning to Fidenza, but appeared to centre all his happiness in the court, where the beauty of his person, the suavity and polish of his manners, and the unrivalled strength of his intellect, rendered him an universal favourite among the ladies.

But he resisted all their allurements, and, previously remarkable for his reserve in female society, now became infinitely more so. He relaxed only in the presence of the queen, towards whom he displayed the most delicate attention and constant devotion. He soon became the favourite guest at

all her majesty's parties, and was often seen to ride with her through the streets of Naples, while, out of complaisance it was supposed for him, she sometimes extended her excursions to the woods beyond Torre del Greco.

A queen is but a gentleman's wife, and Renato had meditated far too much on society to be dazzled by the lustre of titles. When apart from society, therefore, he regarded her simply as the Lady Violetta, who seemed also, on her part, perfectly willing to forget that there were such things as crowns and sceptres in the world. She looked up to Renato as a man elevated far above her by his virtue and constancy. Little, alas! did she comprehend of human nature.

Had he been indeed allowed to pursue without interruption the chosen tenor of his way, he might have been a virtuous man, almost without taint or reproach. But he had been stung, and he determined to sting again. The rank and power of the man who had injured him only imparted tenfold force to his vengeance. He had made up his mind, therefore, to succeed or perish, and at first looked upon Violetta only as a means to further him in the accomplishment of his ends. But as their acquaintance grew more intimate, he was frequently almost driven completely from his purpose. Her truth, her delicacy, her confidence in her husband, the simplicity and guilelessness of her heart disarmed him, till he reflected on the terrible scene

he had witnessed at the castle, which again poured the lava of revenge into his blood, and determined him to persevere.

XXXII.

When he perceived he had excited a deep interest in the queen's mind, he suddenly became a prey to overwhelming melancholy. All his cheerfulness, all his animal spirits forsook him, so that even in her presence he could not muster sufficient self-command to appear interested or amused. His silence, his abstracted air, his strange absence of mind, his moodiness, his pale looks, his starts and agitation, attracted the notice of all. The queen, in particular, observed the change, and entreated him to explain the cause of it.

Week after week he sought to shield himself behind various pretexts, but Violetta becoming more urgent, he replied that if she would grant him a private interview, he would yield to her solicitation, and lay bare before her the sorrow of his heart.

A much better feeling, perhaps, than curiosity induced the queen to grant him what he asked. She began to fear he had forgotten Bianca, and though she felt for him a strong friendship, intended to advise his retreat from the court and return in search of peace to his own castle.

When the count was admitted into her presence

he felt all the difficulty, I might perhaps say, all the horror of his situation. In exposing the wrong which had been done him, he should have to place himself in a disadvantageous and degrading light.

Never did he feel all the bitterness of his wife's infidelity until then. He had loved her, he had idolized her, but to the woman in whose estimation he wished to stand well, she had hitherto appeared a model of virtue, for, strange to say, Violetta had been kept in ignorance of her husband's misdoings.

XXXIII.

But Renato had a part to play, a task to perform, and he resolved to go through with it. Seating himself, therefore, at the queen's request, he said:—

"You have commanded me, madam, to explain to you the cause of my melancholy, and I am prepared to do so upon receiving one assurance."

"Name it," observed Violetta.

"It is this," answered Renato, "that you will promise never to disclose what passes at this interview to any person whatsoever, least of all to your husband."

"As it regards your own private affairs," replied Violetta, "I promise."

"I was once," rejoined the Count di Fidenza, "a happy man, because I loved a woman whose image entirely filled my heart, and left in it no

room for any other wish whatever. Comprehending thoroughly the nothingness of this world's treasures, despising grandeur, pomp, wealth, with whatever else is coveted by ordinary men, I built up the entire fabric of my hopes on that woman's affection. When I left her presence it was like stepping out of the sunshine into the chill shade. I was unhappy till I returned to her, and whatever is most excellent on earth seemed to be included in her love.

"But I had a friend, a rich, powerful, plausible friend, who came without invitation to my castle, and not to weary your majesty by descending into particulars, he seduced my wife."

The queen turned pale, and appeared to breathe with difficulty.

The Count proceeded:—

"When I discovered this calamity, my first thought was to wash out the injury that had been done me in the blood of both. But I relented. I determined to practice a great act of forbearance, of self-denial, of virtue; and I returned to court, where I endeavoured to carry out my design by forgetting my own misery and seeking to promote the happiness of others. But I am a man. I have affections like other men. I have eyes to behold beauty; I have feelings to be stirred deeply by it. I saw the wife of my faithless friend, and—will your majesty pardon me the confession—I loved her."

The queen grew still paler, and felt a strange sickness at her heart; for the eyes of Renato, as he spoke, appeared to kindle her figure, to penetrate its inmost depths, to awaken in her soul strange ideas.

"And who—" inquired Violetta, leaving the sentence half finished.

"You would know," said Renato, "who is the man that has wronged me, and what is the name of his wife?"

"I would," replied she.

"His name," he rejoined, "is Roberto, and hers is Violetta."

"What! my husband faithless, and I loved by another?"

"Do you see that lock of hair?" inquired he; "Is that your husband's?"

"Oh, God! it is," exclaimed the queen.

"Well," continued Renato, "and this is my Bianca's hair. I cut it from the heads of both when they were lying asleep in my marriage-bed—and this," he added, "is your husband's jewel, given to him, I believe, by you."

Violetta fainted—he received her in his arms; but with that reserve and self-command which under nearly all circumstances were his, he restrained his impulses, and would not so much as touch her lips or her hand till she should have shown unequivocally by some act or word that he had her permission.

When Violetta recovered consciousness, she found him supporting her in the most respectful manner. He then quitted his hold, and retiring to a certain distance, resumed :—

"You have heard my sorrows, and my confession —you have witnessed my sufferings, and had your heart not been devoted to the worst of men, you would have divined my love. You are mistress of my secret and of me, Violetta, for I will no more call you queen; and it depends on you whether I shall henceforward be the greatest, happiest, most enviable of men, or the most debased, degraded creature, that with the consciousness of crime and fury in his heart, crawls the streets of Naples."

I shall not attempt to describe the various steps by which Renato became master of Violetta's heart. At length, however, he wrung from her the confession that her affections were exclusively his; upon which he proposed that they should escape from Naples and seek some retreat at the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean, where, with the wealth arising from the sale of his property, they might pass the remainder of their days in obscurity and peace.

XXXIV.

It should be remarked that all this while Roberto had remained in complete ignorance of the designs of Renato. He supposed him to have grown care-

less and dissipated, and to be amusing himself in the ordinary way with the easy ladies of the Court, the whole breath of whose nostrils was intrigue.

He had not withdrawn from him what he called his friendship, but availed himself constantly of his services; and if Renato had appeared to desire it, would have raised him to the highest places of trust and emolument; for the king was generous. He only asked his friend for his wife, in return for whom he was ready to give him almost any amount of his subjects' money.

This is what was called regal magnificence, which fairly entitled Roberto to the most enthusiastic praise of historians; and in the annals of Naples he holds almost the first place for disinterested virtue and generosity.

It is a pity that so much use should have been made of the chase in the development of this little royal drama; but how could it be otherwise? It constituted Roberto's only serious employment, his amusement consisting in seducing the wives of his friends.

Very readily, therefore, did Roberto fall into the trap which Renato now laid for him. A great hunting match having been proposed, the monarch willingly seized the idea, and suffered the husband of his favourite mistress to determine in which part of the country it should take place.

Renato, therefore, chose the scene, and took care

so to dispose of events that they should fall out according to his desire. Every contingency seemed to have been provided for. His poignard was sharp, his sword powerful, and his horse full of strength and agility, his heart steeled against compassion.

Together, therefore, did they set out,—these husbands of fierce passions and desperate resolution. His majesty, without knowing it, rode side by side with a sort of moral volcano, ready every moment to burst and shatter him to pieces by its violence. They hunted, however, all day, and smiled upon each other, and ate salt together, and appeared to be the firmest and most closely united friends in the world—such is the nature of revenge.

As it had been predetermined, Roberto found himself alone with Renato about nightfall, and as he always trusted to his attendants to learn the geography of the district in which he happened to be, found himself in a mountain-forest with which he was utterly unacquainted.

XXXV.

They wandered long and far, until, late in the night, the king began to complain of weariness, and invited his companion to sit down with him on the rocks. They had reached the summit of a sort of table-land, overlooking a wild gorge, which appeared to descend interminably into the dark-

ness. Over the rest of the scene the moon, then at the full, shed a brilliant light, but this fearful gulph suggested the idea of a fathomless abyss, into which whole armies might be hurled and disappear in an instant.

On the very edge of this precipice they alighted, and when each, as if oppressed by weariness, had thrown himself on the ground, the Lord of Fidenza, endeavouring to command his feelings so as to appear perfectly calm, asked the king if he would candidly and honestly answer him one question.

Rendered somewhat uneasy by the tone and manner in which the demand was made, Roberto replied, that of course he would, for "though I am your master," said he, "I am still more your friend, and therefore, ask what you please, and I will answer frankly."

"Then," inquired Renato, "without circumlocution, have you or have you not seduced my wife?"

"How can you ask such a question?" replied the king, his voice faltering considerably.

"I have my reasons," answered Renato; "so, between man and man, tell me honestly."

"Then, of course not," said Roberto, "for how could I be guilty of anything so dishonourable?"

"You are a liar, and a mean caitiff," exclaimed the Count, starting to his feet, "but you have no cause to triumph over me—wife for wife—we are equal."

Roused to fury in his turn, the king exclaimed:—

"Villain, you lie!"

At which words a blow from the Count closed his mouth, and stretched him at his full length on the earth. The infuriated nobleman then putting his foot upon his throat vociferated:—

"With my heel I will squeeze the dastard life out of you, if you do not at once confess yourself to be an adulterer and a liar. When I have had that part of my revenge, I will hurl your worthless carcase down these rocks! I will then take your wife, who is now within call, to my arms, and escape with her beyond the reach of your successor's vengeance, if any one would think of revenging a wretch so despicable as Roberto, the adulterer."

The king, who had been half stunned by the fall, perceiving he was in the power of a desperate man, thought it best to temporize, and play the Jesuit.

"Forgive me, Renato," said he, as far as the pressure on his throat would allow him to speak, "and since you say you have had your revenge, let us forget the past, and be still friends."

"Listen to me," replied his companion, suffering him to rise; "here we stand man to man; you have your weapons, I have mine, and if you imagine yourself equal to a contest with me, take your ground like a cavalier, and defend or avenge yourself."

"Put up your sword, Renato," answered the king, "and let us reason together. Why should we destroy each other—I will yield up the queen to you—give me your wife; we will make the exchange, and the world need not be the wiser, or if they should, there is no one in the kingdom of Naples who would dare to mutter against my authority."

"Oh, I understand you," exclaimed the Count; "should any man, however virtuous or noble, venture to point the finger at your delinquencies, your majesty would put chains upon him, would link him to his fellow in misery, would cast him into a dungeon beneath the earth, would let loose all base things to wound him, would suffer the reptiles of damp and darkness to crawl over his limbs, to bring him that way inch by inch to death."

"Pooh, pooh," cried Roberto, beginning to regain confidence, "this is merely a picture of your excited imagination, since you cannot for one moment suppose I could be so cruel."

"I only know," answered Renato, "that you are an adulterer, a liar, and a coward, and that inclines me to give you credit for cruelty also. But come, you shall descend along with me to the shore, as I have something to show you there, and perhaps the sight may soften my resolution. Otherwise, I give you fair warning I shall make you food for fishes. You doubtless fancy you

can take refuge in the title of king, but I am your superior, and spit at your title, and would as soon send my poignard through you as through the vilest wretch that breathes. Go, follow that path, descend, or I will quicken your movements as men quicken the movements of slaves and dastards."

Roberto had, probably, not read those northern dramas and romances in which the world is sought to be persuaded that some divinity doth hedge a king; but in spite of this ignorance, he thought it somewhat hard that he should be constrained to yield servile obedience to a man who, according to received notions, was still his subject.

But physical superiority, he found, in that instance, united with intellectual superiority, and both together enabled their possessor to look upon his title, his crown, his sceptre, as legends and baubles, more ridiculous than an old wife's tale. Yielding, consequently, to necessity, he moved into the path pointed out to him; and following its deep and tortuous course, emerged upon a small rocky plain on the sea-shore.

There, to his surprise, he beheld a magnificent galley, moored close to the rocks, and on drawing near, his astonishment was infinitely augmented at seeing his queen Violetta on the deck, accompanied by two or three of her ladies. Until then he had regarded the assertions of Renato as mere fictions invented to torture him. He was now too thoroughly convinced of their truth. With a sudden

emotion not altogether without dignity, he turned round and said :—

"Sir, what am I to understand by this sight?"

"Simply," answered Renato, "that your wife is mine, that I have accepted her in exchange for the wretched woman I once loved, whom you may now marry and crown, for she is worthy to be Queen of Naples. That woman, on the other hand, deserves to be my wife, and my wife she is, and my wife she shall be, in spite of your royal authority. Give her to me—I insist upon it; if not, look at that cliff—in another second you shall be at the bottom of it, dashed to atoms, and your soul hurled to that hell which is the only thing you fear."

This threat was uttered in so furious a tone, that the king fully expected that it would instantly be put into execution. Hastening, therefore, to deliver himself from so fearful a situation, he exclaimed :—

"Take Violetta—I give her to you with all my heart; and you in turn—"

"I give you nothing," replied the proud and fierce Lord of Fidenza, interrupting him—"I give you nothing, but the bitter remembrance of those events through which your queen has become mine. There she stands—look at her—it will be for the last time. Return then to Naples, and with the cunning and baseness of which you have proved yourself so capable, spread false reports of

me. Tell the world how you scared and overawed me by the majesty of your person; how I sued for life from the seducer of my Bianca; after which, retire to your chamber, there to writhe with the consciousness of your own dastardliness, and at the knowledge that far in the East, under the shelter of the Crescent, with the mistress of your throne in my Harim, I laugh at your power, and make you daily the subject of my scorn and pity."

Then bounding on board the galley, manned with Muslims, he turned round, and embracing Violetta with one hand, and waving a naked scimitar in the other, he exclaimed:—

"I wish your Majesty joy of the sceptre of Naples—here is my kingdom!"

As Renato uttered these words, the bearded Osmanlis raised a shout, pushed off from the shore, and spreading their canvass to catch the freshening breeze, sailed away over the glad waters.

His majesty, boiling with impotent indignation, fixed his straining eyes upon the white sails, till they faded in the distance. Many and desperate were the projects of revenge he formed: he would pursue—he would overtake—he would torture—he would kill;—his fancy accompanying the fugitives, beheld them in their gorgeous cabin, anticipating the enjoyments of the balmy East. He raved at the thought, he threw himself on the earth, he bitterly, for a moment, repented the vices of his past life, which had exposed him to be trampled upon like a dog by one of his own subjects.

But in what did his schemes of vengeance terminate? Never more was the name of Renato or Violetta heard in Naples, but across the dark arena of war and politics, which at that period attracted the gaze of all Christendom, there was one Selim Pasha, who flashed like a meteor; and it was whispered in the West, that he traced his origin to Italy, and had taken to himself a wife from among the daughters of the Christians.

PART THE FOURTH.

I

THERE is, perhaps, no country in the world in which the traveller in search of mere antiquities finds so much as in Egypt to gratify his passion. But however sublime may be the exclusive devotion to the relics of former times, I by no means belong to the class of persons who are ennobled by it. Though no way insensible to the merits or achievements of the generations now in their coffins, my vulgar sympathies cling with infinitely greater tenacity to the men and women living and breathing around me. The dead are shadows—mighty, it may be, but only in the realm of Isis.

Here on this green and sunny earth there is no place for them. Whatever they have left behind, institutions, books, monuments, all are in a state of decay, and exhibit evident tokens of being on the road to oblivion. But the existing races, separated from them by the infinite gulf which divides life from death, are still susceptible of enjoying and

suffering, of being rendered miserable or happy, of being filled with knowledge, and science, and poetry, and ideas of the beautiful, and religion, and hope; or of being depressed by ignorance, poverty, and misgovernment, almost down to the level of the beast that perisheth.

In Egypt, therefore, as everywhere else, my admiration and a certain amount of pleasant and melancholy remembrances were for the dead, my love and sympathy for the living. Of course, the Arabs, whether in the valley or in the desert, are little better than savages. But that did not interfere with my feelings in the least; for I also am a savage, only withheld from taking refuge in the desert or the woods by the pernicious influence of civilization.

Consequently, when I met at Gheneh numbers of strange and wild people from the interior of Africa, brought thither by exalted ideas of religion, to traverse the Red Sea, and visit the cradle of their faith, I experienced a powerful longing to join them in their pilgrimage.

It is true their faith is not mine, and that I could by no possibility enter completely into the sphere of their ideas, and feel or even know what they felt; yet I could sufficiently realize their intellectual existence to my mind to enjoy, in part at least, their wild excitement, and breathe, through artificial channels, perhaps, the atmosphere of enthusiasm, which hurried them from the centre of

one continent to seek for comfort and religious inspiration in another.

Men of sedate and stationary habits may sit under their vines and fig-trees, or by their comfortable firesides, and smile with a sort of contempt at the toiling pilgrims, who compass half the globe, perhaps, to visit some spot of earth hallowed to their imaginations.

Who knows, however, whether they ought not rather to be envied than despised? Contention, struggling, wandering, are in themselves sources of happiness. It is pleasant to battle with the storm, to traverse the scorching sands, to behold every day new places and new people, to feel the excitement of uncertainty, to amuse yourself with conjecturing what manner of town or desert station you shall reach next; whether the caravan you are to join at such a place will have arrived, or departed, and whether you are destined to triumph over all obstacles, and reach your distant place of pilgrimage, and afterwards your home, or to be received into the bosom of your mother earth by the way, and have your eyes closed by strangers under the control and direction of God.

In the bazaar of Ghench, I felt that to all intents and purposes I was myself a pilgrim, with much less excuse also than those around me. I was in search of what I did not, perhaps, find; while they, the Ababdé, the Bisharein, the Sheyghia, the natives of Fez and Morocco, the people of

Bornou and Sennaar, and of other places, the very names of which are unknown in Europe, all knew well what they were in search of; and whether they actually arrived at Mecca, or died by the way, did not entertain the slightest doubt that the effort they made would be accounted to them for righteousness.

Certainly the spirit of commerce mingled in nearly all cases with that of religion. But who would make this a reproach to them? Besides that it was strictly subordinate to the sentiment of devotion, we should remember that without calling in the aid of trade, the pilgrims would never be able to perform the sacred journey at all.

II.

On returning to my boat, the wind being fair, we hoisted sail, and went merrily up the Nile towards Thebes. I had hung my cabin windows with pink curtains, and now let them down in all their folds, so as to produce a soft rosy light, by which I might proceed with the daily labour of continuing my journal. Let it not, however, be supposed from my employing the word labour, that it was at all irksome.

Quite the contrary. I only wish others could have half the pleasure in reading, and perhaps they would, if they took this rough narrrative to the spot, and compared my sensations with their

own. Still it is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to convey a correct idea of what one feels under such circumstances.

I can revive and place vividly before my mind the material aspect of the scene, but many of its accompaniments which went to make up the inspiration of the moment, cannot be recalled. As I paused in my writing and looked around me, I saw my curtain slightly fluttering over rows of books set edgeways on the neat chintz divan. Among them was Milton, a little dumpy volume, with all the criticisms of Addison from the Spectator printed at the end, and a set of prints almost comic from the rudeness of the execution.

This, from time to time, I used to take up, and read all the passages in which the land of Nile is mentioned. Then would perhaps follow a chapter of the Old Testament or some portion of Diodorus or Herodotus, till my attention was diverted from these amusements by the voice of Suliman, or of some sentimental fellow among the sailors, squatting on the deck and singing some desperate love-song as he watched the wind in our huge lateen sails, or prepared the vegetables for dinner.

Through the small square cabin-door, beneath a rude portico of matting I caught ever and anon, according to the course of the river, glimpses of the Libyan or Arabian mountains, glowing like piles of lava in the sun, and contrasting singularly with the rich green plains interspersed thickly with

villages and groves of doum-palms, which extended close up to their feet.

Presently, having nothing else to do, I got Suliman to fill my pipe, and went out to smoke it sitting on the gunwale of the boat and chatting with the sailors.

Many may suppose that from want of education these poor fellows had nothing to say. But I have not generally found that men are conversible in proportion as they are educated. Learning, in some persons, seems like water in a narrow-necked bottle: it gets, as an Irishman would phrase it, in its own way, and hinders itself from running out. At any rate, my friends the boatmen were extremely amusing and talkative fellows, who could tell good stories after their own fashion, sing songs, and talk sentiment, too, at times.

I admit, that with one or two exceptions, they were a set of immoral vagabonds, who, though they had left wives and children at Búlak, usually spent the night in low coffee-houses with derwishes, dancing-girls, and all the riffraff of the neighbourhood. But towards me, personally, they were invariably well-behaved, not altogether, perhaps, from disinterested motives, but neither was it, I am persuaded, entirely from selfishness. They were gratified by the notice I took of them, and because I inquired about their fathers and mothers and all the humble economy of their homes.

III.

I remember once at Benisouef being extremely angry with the Egyptians for laughing so often and so much as they do. Considering how they are oppressed and pillaged by the Government, I thought it would have been more becoming in them to be sulky, morose, and perpetually brooding over their wrongs.

But I soon felt the absurdity of this notion; for unless they could overthrow their Government, and set up a better in its place,—an operation which appears to be beyond the reach of far more enlightened populations,—it would be perfectly ridiculous in them to cultivate moodiness. They had much better be as they are, gay, light-hearted, frivolous, shedding tears occasionally, but generally merry and making the most of the term of life allotted them.

When nations are very rigorously treated, they almost invariably take their revenge by becoming debauched and vicious. All over the East there is consequently an irresistible tendency towards sensual pleasures. The more you insult and buffet them, the more effeminate and depraved do they become. Adversity to them carries no precious jewel in its head. They are not chastened by calamity, do not become stoics, but, employing

voluptuousness as a sort of buffer to prevent their being crushed by the collision of their misfortunes, they take life easily, and exclaim:—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

I make no pretension to explain the philosophy of the thing, but while men appear to value life in free, and especially in Christian countries, that is, in proportion as it is valuable, they treat it almost as dirt in vast grinding despotisms, particularly where the belief in fatality is prevalent.

Most persons have remarked that the same thing is observable in plagues, great famines, and the devastations of war. Thucydides attributes the corruption of the Athenians to the pestilence and other overwhelming calamities which befel them during the Peloponnesian war; the same phenomena present themselves in the history of Florence; and generally in Egypt and Asia men have proved themselves practical epicureans from time immemorial.

IV.

I wish my friend Linton had been with me as I sailed from Gheneh towards Thebes; what landscapes would he not have built up out of the experience of that single day! What an infinite variety of views did I behold one after another, shifting, changing, assuming new features every moment, as the kandjia floated along the face of the majestic river! I cannot say they came or

went like shadows. They were rather so many creations of light, brilliant, dazzling, clothed with gorgeous colours, and over-canopied invariably with ethereal blue.

The breeze continuing fresh and favourable, we sailed on till about an hour before midnight, when we cast anchor far out in the stream a little above the village of Negadeh. My own wish always was to moor near the shore, but Suliman and his friend the Captain, being both from Lower Egypt, had a strong prejudice against these southern folks, swore they were thieves, assassins, and what not, and earnestly wished to inoculate me with the same antipathy; I ought to add—without the least success.

However, in very lonely parts of the Valley it might occasionally have been unsafe to lie close to the banks. One night, I remember, when I had sat up very late writing my journal, I was startled by a heavy animal springing down suddenly on the roof of the cabin. I had been told that wolves were abundant among the mountains hard by, and as, contrary to rule, all the sailors invariably went to sleep, I thought our unwelcome visitor might descend to the deck and throttle two or three of them before they could be roused out of their heavy slumber.

Taking, therefore, my lamp in one hand and a pistol in the other, I opened the cabin-door very softly, and striding over Suliman, who lay there

perfectly unconscious he was in the vicinity of a wolf, I lifted up the mat slightly, in order to get a glimpse of the enemy before firing. My tactics were useless, for no sooner did the light of the lamp stream out than he bounded up the bank, laughing, as the Arabs say, at my beard, as well as at my pistol.

I converted the incident, however, into an excuse for rousing the person who ought to have kept watch, and having informed him how near he was being devoured, by way of clearing my own conscience, I retreated to the cabin, thoroughly convinced he would fall asleep again in ten minutes. To prevent nocturnal visitations of this sort, it was perhaps prudent to cast anchor at some distance from the shore.

And here will the reader pardon me if I introduce a few verses, written afterwards on my descent of the river? Rendered wakeful by a variety of circumstances, by loneliness, by excitement, by thoughts of home, I sat gazing through my cabin-window at the ever-changing landscape, lighted up brilliantly by the moon. I had been continuing my journal, and the pen was still in my hand. Under the influence of the scene, I addressed the following little poem to the presiding spirit of home:—

"What joys came with the evening hour,
O Leman Lake, upon thy shore,
Moistening the heart as dew the flower
Which spring's sweet breath is breathing o'er.

Then rush'd the boisterous boyish band,
From tasks broke loose to scamper far,
Along the wild pine-shadow'd strand
Where Chillon greets the evening star.

And dearer still, there wander'd too
Their mother with her infant care,
Whose face, whose eyes, love beaming through,
Made doubly bright and doubly fair.

And now what brings the wizard night
As down the calm and moonlit Nile
My vessel shapes its arrowy flight,
By palm-tree grove and mouldering pile?

What brings it? Thoughts of home and those
Who made it home, and for whose sake
My sleepless fancy hourly throws
Its hungering glance toward Leman Lake.

The wild dog's bark, the jackal's cry,
The rowers' rude but joyous song,
The stars which burn amid the sky,
The breeze that bears my bark along:

All, all but serve to touch the heart,
And make it turn, where'er I roam,
To that bless'd mansion where THOU art,
My hope, my joy—my life—my HOME.

V.

When a man in perfect health has passed several nights with little sleep, he becomes at length so much a prey to drowsiness that he would indulge it almost in the cannon's mouth, nor can any amount of romance or curiosity keep him awake.

But there are agencies more potent for this purpose than cannons or romance. I mean the jackals, whose infernal howlings would almost

wake the dead. Indeed I have sometimes felt surprised that the mummies did not some night start up all at once, rush down into the valley, and smother these nefarious yelpers, so that they might rest in peace during the remainder of eternity.

Dante, who had listened to the wailings of the damned, might perhaps have formed some conception of the chorus without having heard it; but this is what no one else could possibly do.

As you lie comfortably under four blankets in your cabin, just as ambrosial sleep is pouring itself balmily around you, ten legions of devils appear to spring up suddenly out of some chasm in the earth, and to sweep like a hell-storm along the plain—barking, howling, screaming, shrieking as if every wretch were stretched on the rack, or in the process of being broken on the wheel. No sounds ever heard in this world can be more truly hideous, and when the echoes of the rocks catch up the dreadful noise and repeat it on all sides, you irresistibly fancy yourself in Pandemonium, with all its satanic population performing their grim vespers in the midst of darkness visible.

Though not much addicted to swearing, I that night a thousand times anathematized the jackals for putting sweet sleep to flight. In spite of them, however, I did snatch a few moments of forgetfulness, and rose about one o'clock to recommence our voyage towards what far more truly than Rome deserves to be called the Eternal City.

VI.

One often experiences a violent inclination to accomplish something precisely the moment one is most unfit for it. I took it into my head on this interesting night to write home to my friends. I, therefore, placed the paper on the green box before me, squatted down on the cabin-floor, and began like Glendower to call up my spirits from the vasty deep; but they would not come when I did call on them. Sleep was too powerful for thought or action, so I desired Suliman many hours before day to make me some strong Mokha, and fill my pipe, so that if I could not write, I might at least be engaged in something.

When he had performed this part of his duty, he came and planted himself in the cabin-door, and while the kandjia was going rippling up the stream, and the jackals were wailing on both banks, began to tell stories to amuse me. He had been careful at the same time to replenish his own pipe, so that he whiffed and narrated alternately, the one operation being in no way interrupted by the other.

Just let the reader imagine him bending earnestly into the cabin, which no entreaties of mine could induce him to enter, as he said it would not be respectful towards me, and, with his dark phy-

siognomy half wreathed in smoke, pouring forth in rich deep gutturals the adventures of Muslims of both sexes, ferits, jinn, ghouls, and marids.

He related to me particularly, I remember, on that occasion, king Berber's dream, the princess who was changed into a gazelle, and several of the other narratives in the "Tales of the Rhamadhan." In return I told him the last three voyages of Sinbad the Sailor, with which he was previously unacquainted, the Sleeper Awakened, the Enchanted Horse, and several other portions of the "Thousand and One Nights," to which he listened in a sort of ecstasy.

VII.

In many respects Suliman and I were admirably suited to each other. We both loved to hear our own voices, were both passionately fond of story-telling, especially in the style of the Arabian Nights. When the narrative was in his hands I listened with the most devout attention, not simply through politeness, though I trust that would if necessary have had sufficient weight to make me do so—but because his relations were nearly always of a nature to kindle and absorb my fancy.

On his part, observing that he found in me a fit audience, he was never tired of piling one story on another; he did his best, he warmed, he became eloquent, he threw himself successively into every

new character, believed implicitly in the truth of what he was saying, and, therefore, imparted to it a reality well calculated to inspire faith in me.

And may we not discover in this example something analogous to what takes place with respect to literature in society at large? An earnest audience makes an earnest writer. A man's inspiration lies partly within and partly around him. If society refuses to dance, he will not pipe long. He must perceive that he produces an effect; he must discover approbation in the looks of those around him; he must observe tokens that their spirit moves with his spirit, that they feel the force of what he utters, that they attach an importance to it, that they look up to him as a guide, and that, if occasionally they are compelled to blame, it is with gentleness and friendly reluctance.

Either our narratives or curiosity and powers of attention were exhausted long before day, and in spite of the chilliness of the air, I went out on deck to enjoy the never-failing beauty of the Valley. But to enjoy and to describe are two very different things.

If my pen were suddenly transformed into Claude's pencil, it would not enable me to do justice to the landscapes then encircling me on all sides. Suliman busied himself doing something in the cabin: the Arabs, except the helmsman and him who sat quietly watching at the bows, were lying curled up like so many mastiffs asleep; the very jackals had

had their fill of howling, and gone fortunately to rest. There was, therefore, nothing to disturb me, and I stood gazing around in a sort of dreamy ecstasy, caused partly by what I saw, partly by what I remembered.

The moon was nearly at the full, and poured its pearly splendour on the spacious bosom of the river, which rippled, and quivered, and flashed far and near with silvery light; here and there, through dense masses of wood, a village minaret arose, glittering, as it were, in metallic brilliance; while on either hand towered the naked crags of the Arabian and Libyan chains, here rough with pinnacles, there extending their regular elevation like a wall, in some places bright, elsewhere indented with deep shadows, which played and mocked and chased each other as we glided along softly before the breeze.

I seemed at that moment to understand thoroughly how the Egyptians came to love their country with something like a religious love. Its beauty, especially at night, appears to me absolutely unrivalled; the blue of the sky, the brightness of the moon, the surpassing size and splendour of the stars and constellations, the calm, the serenity, the fragrant and balmy air, the influence of boundless antiquity, the imagined presence of goddesses and gods,—a thousand powerful influences combine to take possession of the soul, and to overwhelm it with resistless emotion.

VIII.

Nothing, therefore, is more remarkable in the civilization of ancient Egypt than the almost entire absence of poetry. One song we find mentioned by historians; but with this exception we are left to wonder that a nation so prolific in other forms of intellect should have been unequal to the generation of that peculiar variety of mind which delights in embodying a people's emotional existence, and alone makes intelligible its heart's feelings and affections.

Yet we discover from their monuments that there was among them much for a poet to pourtray; but it was of a material nature. Even when the invisible world was forced by the genius of theology to descend and mingle with the world of sense, the difference in its constituent elements consisted not in kind but in degree. Poetry refuses its sympathy to allegories and abstractions, and though it may seek a momentary pleasure from contemplating in a sort of beatific vision things lying beyond the flaming limits of the universe, it soon returns to the history, the hopes and fears, the passions, yearnings, and expectations of individual mortals.

Life, however, in Egypt, as in modern China, would seem to have been almost always confined strictly within the circle of sense, which the ima-

gination might occasionally seek to embellish, but seldom to purify or elevate above the level selected by the national character. Everything was steady, appointed, regular.

The genius of the nation tolerated no wild flights beyond the limits prescribed by law, and it seems probable that this fixity of character traced its origin to the peculiar influence of nature in their country, where everything appears to be subjected to the operation of unvarying causes, which produce, at stated times, the sequence of seasons, the rise and retreat of the Nile, the appearance of certain birds and insects, and all the processes of agriculture which depend on moisture and heat.

Even in modern times the poets have with wonderful perseverance abstained from meddling with the land of Nile. Allusions they no doubt make to the history and circumstances of Egypt, and in some few cases select from its arts and superstitions some striking features to corroborate their opinions or shed a light upon their ideas; but if the historical world were mapped out, it would be found that there is no region which has not been oftener and more deeply flooded by poetry, and retained richer and nobler traces of its passage than the land of the Pharaohs. After all my attempts, however, to explain the matter for my own satisfaction, I know not whence this neglect has arisen.

IX.

To me no part of the earth seems fuller of suggestions, more alluring to the fancy, more lavishly strewed with sources of delight, richer in historical reminiscences, or better stored with the materials of fiction, than the domain of Isis and Osiris.

The Nile itself seems a mighty epic to me, gushing forth in darkness amid lands unknown, then emerging with its blue waters into the light of history, and reflecting as it flows innumerable monuments replete with surpassing grandeur and ancient almost as the globe itself, creating, by slow deposits, a whole country as it advances towards the sea, and exciting through countless ages a gratitude and an admiration which habitually degenerated into idolatry.

The sky, also, which everywhere hangs enamoured over this mighty river, suggests to my fancy ideas too lovely to be invested with language. Clouds, no doubt, have their charms, especially when, blushing with crimson and suffused with golden light, they pile themselves up in the Orient to witness and accompany the birth of day, or spread themselves like a gorgeous funereal pall over its death-like descent into the west.

But give me a sky of unstained blue, which rises in infinite altitude over the earth, the image of

eternal purity, through which the sun travels daily like a god, with not a vapour to intercept one of his rays in its descent towards the habitations of man.

Here indeed there is no variety. Day after day the morning breaks with unsullied brilliance, and the same immitigable glory accompanies its close. It is a serene monotony, productive of ever-varying reflections, a calm suggestive of unspeakable delight, a beauty resulting from unity, which fills the soul with infinite yearnings after eternal beatitude.

How it has happened, then, that poetry has not been forward to adorn its mimic universe with those forms of majesty and splendour which nature puts on in Egypt, I am unable to explain.

Shelley, whose dreamy genius rendered him peculiarly susceptible of this kind of inspiration, has in more than one place endeavoured to convert the Nile to poetical uses; and Byron also makes occasional allusions which in my mind connect his name with the country. Our other great poets also derive from features in the Nilotic Valley the materials for metaphors and similes, but with very few exceptions they have avoided making it the scene of their fictions.

Shakspeare's "Anthony and Cleopatra" physically locates itself in Egypt, and so does Dryden's "All for Love;" but they both move in a sphere which is only an extension of the Roman World, and have, therefore, properly speaking, little beyond

an accidental connexion with the Egyptian history or traditions.

X.

Just as the first flush of dawn was beginning to become faintly visible in the east, Mohammed, the Reis, pointed out to me the lofty palm-groves encircling the northern limits of the temple of Karnak. We were then entering on the sacred territory of Thebes, and that I might enjoy the first sight of the ruins, I desired him to put me on shore alone. I landed on the left bank, and with a sort of boyish eagerness at which the philosopher may smile, ran with all my might in order to reach a particular point, spoken of by the historians of the French Expedition, by the time the sun's first rays should stream into the dusky valley from behind the crest of the Arabian mountains.

But the propylæa and mighty ruins of Karnak, towering far above the date-palms, like the pinnacles of a mountain, were not the principal objects in the magnificent landscape then assuming form and consistency before me.

The glories of man's works below became almost invisible in the blaze of glory diffused over God's works above: the tabernacle of the sun, crimson, purple, amethyst, and gold, piled up like a mountain in the Orient over what appeared to be a flaming sea, diverging north and south, seemed to suggest to the imagination the sudden appearance of some

divinity from behind that screen of dazzling splendour.

Presently, earth seemed to mimic heaven in brightness; the crests of the Arabian mountains, encircled with a halo of vivid colours, glowed tremulously for a moment, as if about to smoke and burst forth in flame, when the sun rose as if with one bound from behind the line of the horizon, and all nature became flooded at once with light almost too bright for the sense.

Then stood forth the ruins of Thebes in all their grandeur. Time seemed to have receded four thousand years, and to have given back the city to me as it was in the age of Rameses. Wreaths and columns of white mist, interpenetrated and glowing with light, rolled here and there between the antique structures, concealing their imperfections, overcanopying what might have been the mass of private buildings, and imparting to the whole the aspect of a stupendous city, displaying its pinnacles only through the luminous vapours of the morning.

The broad Nile, illuminated and rendered almost crimson by the sun, rolled its flashing waters from south to north, with overwhelming majesty. I looked around me on all sides, at the towering mountain-peaks behind Gournou, at the Memnonium and antique temple of Medinet-Habou, at Karnak, and the avenue of sphinxes, at the Arabian mountains, at the palm-groves and the

villages, and yet, shall I confess it, the sight of one small white sail, flapping idly in the morning air, just beneath the vast obelisk and pillars of Luxor, touched my heart more sensibly than anything else in that gorgeous panorama. It was the sail of Vere's boat! His anger had then evaporated, and he was there waiting for me, that as friends and companions we might ascend the remainder of the river together.

Hailing my boat, I hastily jumped into it, and sailing towards Luxor, soon found myself standing in my friend's cabin, where, in expectation of my arrival, he had had a splendid breakfast laid out, and was sitting down by the table, determined not to touch it until I came. There was a thousand irresistible apologies in the friendly shake of the hand he gave me as I leaped on board.

"You have forgiven me, St. John," said he; "I see it in your face. And for myself, if you had not appeared when you did, I should have put about the kandjia and come down the river to meet you."

Nothing more needed to be said. The next moment we were sitting at breakfast together, and the new-laid eggs, coffee and buffalo's milk, seemed to have acquired a fresh flavour from the friendship that presided over their distribution. Though he had been there two days, he declared he had scarcely seen anything, not caring, he said, to visit the ruins without me.

The pleasure, in fact, was to see them together, to bring our joint reading to bear upon them, to compare our ideas and sensations, to dispute amicably on their merits and antiquity,—in short, to enjoy a fragment of English society in the midst of whatever is most ancient and marvellous among the relics of former ages.

"O'er shatter'd shrines and wasted walls,
Where sunshine saddens as it falls,
And none of all the roofs and domes
O'er its solemn surface spread
Look as they were for abiding homes,
Save those which hold its dead.
Through noise and glare, that city is
Still like a vast necropolis,
And men amid its tombs to-day,
Like pilgrims sitting mid ruins grey." *

XI.

I now learned that there was a sort of small northern population at Thebes, consisting of Indian officers, antiquaries, painters, and architects, with one lady, the politeness of whose manners, the charms of whose conversation, and the nobleness of whose sentiments, must have caused her to be remembered with mingled respect and admiration by many travellers.

Being now in the capital of Sesostris, on the very spot where, in all likelihood, the worship of Isis originated, it is very natural that the reader should

* Thomas Kibble Hervey, "Fantocini Boy," one of the most original and beautiful poems of the language.

expect me to plunge all at once over head and ears in antiquity and theology, and perhaps disappear like Curtius in those unfathomable gulfs. But I am much too fond of sunshine, voluntarily to court such a catastrophe. The temples and the statues, the obelisks and the sphinxes, the tombs and the subterranean palaces, can wait.

Vere and I, now perfectly reconciled, soon after breakfast mounted our donkeys, and accompanied by Suliman, Abou-Zaid, and a whole posse of Arabs, proceeded to visit the English inhabitants of the tombs at Gournou.

As we approached the village of this name, which stands on the slope of a barren hill, I witnessed two phenomena, the like of which I never saw elsewhere: large troops of hungry dogs, so strong and fierce that they could only be kept off from making a breakfast of us by showers of stones and heavy blows from iron shod nabouts; and second, an infinite number of pits produced by excavating for antiquities, but presenting to the eye the appearance of so many mines exploded by a besieging army in making its approaches to some capital city.

When we had emerged from the region of dogs and pits, we toiled up an extremely steep declivity, till we reached a broad esplanade, running in front of a street of sepulchral excavations, of very spacious dimensions, commanding a view of nearly the whole site of Thebes.

Domiciliated in these tombs, we found the family we had come to visit, consisting of a husband, a wife, and a young brother, a lad of gentle manners, who often, during my subsequent visits, kindly constituted himself my guide to the tombs and ruins.

XII.

It must, of course, be somewhat startling to find a pleasant drawing-room in a tomb, and musical instruments, and ladies' work-baskets, with all the familiar paraphernalia of life in the close vicinity of embalmed Egyptians, sleeping in the rocky chambers which, four thousand years ago, they excavated for themselves.

The lady, an Oriental by descent and in blood, had been educated in England, so that she united the manners of the North with the sentiments and vivacity of a warmer climate; her costume also was that of the East; vest, trowsers, pelisse, turban, concealing a figure of singular elegance, and setting off a countenance full of thought, grace, and interest. Strange was the contrast between our conversation and the place. Every moment England was referred to,—the ideas, customs, the people,—until we often forgot altogether that we were in a tomb in Upper Egypt. Streets and houses in London were spoken of as familiarly as if they had been situated just over the way, and it then seemed as if our civilization had truly some charm and soul in it. And so, after all, it has.

For what is man, but above all, what is woman without it? A savage possessing the finest form in the world would have all the interest in her life exhausted in the course of a few weeks. The charm of our existence lies in our ideas, which, extending beneath our sympathies, our emotions, our affections and passions, impart to them their true significance and value.

XIII.

And here I must take some liberties with the chronology of my journal, and bring together what happened in the winter and the spring, in my ascent and descent of the Nile. It matters little when I visited this or that ruin, or took this or that ride. My first stay, however, lasted but a few days. The second was longer, and during its whole continuance I resided in the tombs, so that I became abundantly familiar with every object on the western bank of the river.

Vere remained in his boat, which lay moored near the great ruin at Luxor, and there was a small party of friends from India domiciliated in the village. Most pleasantly, therefore, did the time pass at Thebes. We made parties, we visited the sepulchres and temples together, and, instead of looking like a company of antiquaries, with ideas swathed in mummy clothes, we too often resembled, I fear, a section of the ancient society of

Thebes, intent on the enjoyment of the passing hour.

Still, as in reality I had come to study, and not to amuse myself, I divided the day into two parts, and, rising early, ascended the hills to contemplate the topography of the ruins, and obtain as exact an idea as possible of the site of this ancient city; or examine the columns, the sculptures, and the hieroglyphics which court and mock the gaze on every side. Sometimes, also, instead of sitting at the social board, where whatever can render life agreeable was assembled—beauty, good temper, learning and wit—I stole forth alone, and wandered by the light of the moon or stars among the fragments of old Thebes, which appeared at such times inexpressibly sad and desolate. I remember particularly one night descending to the Memnonium, and seating myself on a fragment of granite in the shade of one of the walls.

XIV.

The moon was shining brilliantly, which, I suppose, had tempted forth the screech-owl from her hiding-place, for perching herself aloft in some concealed nook, she screamed and hooted like a devil let loose. I am extremely tolerant, in general, of the presence of animals, but this noisy serenader quite put me out of temper. Taking up a handful of small stones, therefore, I sent them rattling along the walls, and speedily dislodged my

noisy friend, who decamped and took up her position on some distant ruin, from which her shrieking and wailing did not sound altogether amiss.

It has been commonly believed that the building in which I then sat was partly a library, partly a tomb, the former intended probably to prepare people for the latter. Some among the old Egyptians would seem to have entertained a proper respect for study, the result of which they denominated the medicine of the soul, a phrase which it is said was once inscribed over the door of this ruined chamber; but whatever the nature of this medicine may have been, it has now lost all its medicinal properties, and mingled in the dust with those who so laboriously prepared it.

Papyri and mummies, statues and hieroglyphics, temples, tombs, kings and stone-masons, all now contribute to attract strangers to the great city of No, situated in the midst of the waters. Little, therefore, did the medicine of the soul profit those who took it. It may have prepared them for death, it may have reconciled them to the fact that they, with those whom they most dearly loved, should one day become mummies, and lie with outstretched legs, and arms swathed to their ribs, side by side in dumb forgetfulness among the excavations of the Libyan mountains. But it did not teach them how to preserve Thebes from becoming a ruin, how to defend their hearths and household gods from the foot of the spoiler.

XV.

Never was I more strongly impressed than at that moment with a veneration for the sword. There was a time, evidently, when the Egyptians could wield it, when marshalled round their generals they poured south and north, inspiring neighbouring nations with terror, and causing it to be clearly understood that the Nilotic valley was inhabited and defended by men.

While this temper of mind prevailed among the nation, the Thebans could take the physic of the soul in peace; the Persians, the Assyrians, the Medes, with their fiery chivalry, kept aloof, and respected the Nile; but when epicureanism and effeminacy gained ground, when the neigh of the steed was exchanged for the soft songs and libertine movements of the dancing girls, when a pernicious philosophy had introduced itself, teaching that enjoyment is the sole end of life, that there is nothing nobler than the delights of sense, that magnanimity and self-devotion and grandeur of sentiment are fictions or delusions, and that endurance is to be substituted for energy and action, Cambyses easily found the way to Thebes, toppled down its walls and turrets on the heads of its dreamy philanthropists, and quenched their pedantic theories and speculations in the blood of all that was noblest and most beautiful among its children.

Gournou, Karnak, Luxor and Medinet-Habou may be regarded as lasting witnesses against those who would emasculate humanity and render it a doting eunuch, saying Peace, peace, where there is no peace. No head sleeps so sweetly as that which is pillowed on steel. It is a sign that society has grown corrupt and diseased, when it begins to dispense with the warlike virtues, and inculcate indifference to right and wrong.

XVI.

I was pursuing these reflections, which were growing rather fierce than melancholy, when I became suddenly conscious I was not alone. In the deep shade, rendered denser and more observable by the bright moonlight above, I now discovered the figure of a man sitting quietly on a stone, with his arms folded, and his head drooping slightly on his breast.

With that abrupt and half uncourteous manner, natural, I fear, to Europeans, I started up and went towards him, repeating, however, as I did so, the salutation of peace. He returned it to me in a voice sweet originally, and rendered doubly gentle and mellow by age. My taciturn companion was, as I now discovered, a Derwish, who, finding his sleeping apartment too warm, had come forth to meditate in the open air on the attributes and perfections of God.

Old age is assuredly beautiful when the light of

religion beams around it. It seems to have got upon an elevation where the rays of heaven already stream upon it, like the pinnacles of the Alps which catch the sun, and are rendered bright and luminous while everything below is wrapped in mists and shadows.

I sat down by the side of the Derwish, and observing his pipe lying unlighted by his side, I asked him if I should fill it as well as my own, that we might smoke together. Pleased with the deference and respect which he could not fail to detect in my tone and manner, he handed me the pipe, which I filled, and by the help of flint and steel, immediately lighted. I then took three or four whiffs to put it into proper smoking order, and presented it to him, after which, I did the same for my own.

We now glided into conversation with as much ease and familiarity as if we had been friends for years. The remarks and observations he made, soon convinced me that he had not passed his life at Thebes, and by degrees I managed to lead him into an account of his own career.

A native of Egypt, he had addicted himself from his earliest youth to the practice of religion, and taking upon him a vow of poverty, set forth after the manner of the Derwishes, to wander almost at random over the world, subsisting on the charity of the Faithful, but in return, instructing them in the truths and precepts of El-Islam.

Notwithstanding that he required and needed nothing, the generosity of the Muslim world had, against his will, enriched him. He received constantly presents of gold and silver, which he concealed in his tattered garments, and returning from time to time to Thebes, put them into a brazen vessel, and buried them in the earth. This he did in the hope of being one day able to realize a design formed almost from his boyhood. He had observed with pain that the children of the Prophet, everywhere afflicted with ignorance, are more especially so in Egypt; and most of all, perhaps, in those scattered villages which mark the site of the ancient capital of the valley, and contrast so strangely with the fragments of pomp and magnificence remaining to attest the power and opulence of former ages.

At length, finding the treasures he had amassed sufficient for his purpose, he returned to Gournou, built himself a humble residence, with an oratory attached, and close to the latter, a large apartment in which he collected together the children of the neighbourhood, that he might teach them to read and write, and initiate them in the truths of religion. He made no difference between the sexes, but taught equally girls and boys the knowledge which it was in his power to impart.

Here, in Europe, perhaps, it would not have been considered great. He knew the situation of all the countries over which the light of the Crescent

gleams. He had studied carefully the history and traditions of the East, was deeply versed in the Koran and its Commentators, but above all, had formed for himself an ethical system, replete with elevation and purity, and calculated to infuse into the soul that serenity which science and even philosophy so often fails to impart.

He had not laid aside the turban, in deference to the prevailing mode, and its dark folds, descending low over the forehead, appeared to lend his countenance a peculiar majesty, greatly augmented by the long white beard flowing in waves over his breast. He loved to speak of what constituted the happiness of children, and as he descanted on their improvement, on their gentleness, on their gratitude, and the beauty of piety as it dawned upon their tender minds, I could not otherwise than regard him with some degree of envy. Happy old man!

Religion had done for him what no proficiency in worldly knowledge could have accomplished. He possessed that peace of mind which nothing earthly can give or take away; and according to his firm belief, his existence reposed on the mercy and majesty of God which pervaded his whole being, and placed him far beyond the reach of all selfish or mean feelings. He lived, I could not doubt, exclusively for others, though probably the most calculating self-worshipper never tasted a joy like his, when in the golden morning of the tropics

his little disciples came flocking round him to hear divine truth from his lips.

May the dust of Thebes lie lightly on his breast! for he is doubtless gone to his repose, gone where the truly great and noble of the earth may commune with each other for ever, lighted by the presence of God, and remembering the ways of the world through which they have passed no otherwise than as the creations of a dream, beautiful at times, but sad also on account of the unkindness which man too frequently shows to man.

I afterwards often visited my friend, the Derwish, in his own dwelling, ate salt with him, and witnessed the beneficent profusion with which he distributed the treasures of his wisdom as well as his worldly treasures among his poor neighbours. It is of men like him that Mohammedanism manufactures its saints. I would the world had a longer calendar of such. He reminded me forcibly of the son of Sophroniscus, and I sometimes muttered to myself those words of Alcibiades: "I must forcibly tear myself from the society of this man, or I shall sit by him enchanted by his conversation till I grow old, till all my hairs be silver."

XVII.

Everything that has come down to us respecting the ancient Egyptians, proves they were a leisurely people, wise and philosophical, if you

will, but addicted to making a plaything of knowledge, and setting more value on enjoyment than on time. They cared not how the world wagged, provided they could amuse themselves.

Of this we may be said to discover a proof in their enigmatical style of delivering their opinions, which by exciting and often defeating curiosity, created an intense eagerness in the mind to discover what was veiled or hidden from it. They had already, no doubt, observed that things easy of acquisition are seldom greatly valued, whatever may be their intrinsic worth; whereas, that which is difficult to be obtained, which flies when we pursue it, involves itself in mystery, and if found at all, is only discovered after a long and arduous search, lays hold of your imagination, and suggests the idea that it possesses more excellent qualities than we, perhaps, are capable of comprehending.

This persuasion, in all likelihood, led to the adoption of the hieroglyphical system, in which every symbol was an enigma, suggestive of a thousand explanations, of which one only could be true. The proverbs and dark sayings of the ancients were hieroglyphics in words, while the sculptured symbols on their monuments were so many riddles and enigmas set before the eye.

We now stand in face of them, and feeling their meaning to be impenetrable, suffer ourselves to be persuaded that the whole history of the ancient world, with its learning, its philosophy, and its

wisdom, lies there, behind that tantalizing veil of symbols, which never has been or can be drawn aside.

XVIII.

It is pleasant to hold this faith, even though we deceive ourselves, and no doubt there was in old times rare knowledge in Egypt, especially in the natural sciences, which they cultivated with indefatigable perseverance. Perhaps they saw how little is to be gained by plunging into the ocean of metaphysics, when, after years of toil, we often bring up nothing to the surface, but the conviction that we have laboured in vain.

It was productive of more satisfaction to their minds to observe the processes and operations of life, the mutations and vicissitudes of the physical world, the development of moral ideas, the effect of laws and governments, and all the multiplied relations of civil society; and to invent symbols and allegories, by which in a brief and picturesque way their notions of these might be transmitted to posterity.

They may be regarded, therefore, as pre-eminently a studious race. Certain we never can be, that we correctly interpret their thoughts; but it has sometimes appeared to me, whilst standing before their sculptured and painted monuments, that I discerned there the rudiments of theories on the transmission of life, which neither the Stagy-

rite, nor Buonaccioli, nor Harvey, nor Lewenhoeck could have more completely developed.

On the procession of the soul, we know not precisely what their ideas were, for the fables of Amenti and the Metempsychosis and the Great Year teach us nothing; but it seems probable, that in their view the first progenitors of mankind received directly from the gods the principle of intellect, and this, in passing on from generation to generation, wears out by use the vessels that contain it, and necessitates its transmission, or escape, or absorption in the great ocean of being.

To suggest this idea, they sometimes delineate the microcosm at the moment that unity is transformed into duality, with a scarabeus representing Phthah in the second remove, mystically projecting its influence into the mouth.* Here we see vitality, whether we call it heat, electricity, or ether, descending into man from above, after which the stream flows on with uninterrupted movement through individuals and nations, kindling, spreading, emitting new light, receiving new inspirations, becoming powerful and luminous, till it touches on that point in the fatal circle, which confounds existence with its antipodes.

The universe, they seemed to have believed, is belted by the formless infinite — the womb of nature, and, perhaps, her grave, which introduces,

* Thus in Scripture: "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

as it were, into the sphere of our observation, modifications of itself, which have then a phenomenal and transitory existence.

XIX.

Whatever efforts travellers or others may make to disguise the fact, Thebes is still, to all intents and purposes, the city of the dead. All its real interest arises out of this circumstance. You go there, properly speaking, to hold communion with death, to interrogate the dust of old times, to listen, if perchance you may hear the voice and inspiration which come from beyond the grave.

Society there, no doubt, as elsewhere, underwent its natural metamorphoses, and from having been grand and simple, came to exhibit that worst form of corruption, indifference to everything in the heaven above or in the earth beneath. But your sympathies are with it in its healthy state, when its various members looked upon death as their home, and life only as the obscure passage to it,—when Isis, felt, though invisible, stood with open arms on the further side of the tomb to receive the soul on its liberation, and bear it away to eternal joy.

Something there may be in the atmosphere, something in the ruins, something in the traditions and associations, transmitted to us from ages long gone by, whose united influence produces in the

soul a sensible diminution of that reluctance we all feel to leave the

"Warm precincts of the cheerful day."

Often and often while wandering at night among these colossal fragments of the past, I experienced almost a longing to melt into the air, and be at rest. To die seemed perfectly in keeping with the character of the place, though such is the sophistry of the mind, that I should not in death have expected to lose all secular consciousness.

I am aware that the delusion arose from the impossibility of realizing in life the idea of death. While we exist it is beyond our power to conceive the cessation of existence, or the transference of the vital principle from an organized material system into a thing without length, breadth, weight, or power of impulse.

I looked, therefore, above and around me, and fancied that by shuffling off this mortal coil, I should only be gaining a power of vision denied to me now, that I should only be lifting and passing behind the veil which conceals the countenance of our goddess-mother from our sight.

We talk of the other world, but we are in it even while we move through this. The one is the world of our senses, whose parts we hear, touch, or see; the other is that of our souls, which comes not, and possibly never, even in our disembodied state, can come nearer to us than through the presentment of our speculations and ideas.

Cicero has a grand thought when speaking of Pompeius Magnus. "How happy would it have been for him," he says, "had he died when all Italy was offering up prayers for his life!" The great Roman orator had felt how doubly we die when we have beheld ourselves first perish in the recollection of those we loved, when we have beheld our image blotted out from one tablet after another, to be replaced by that of some one else, when the souls that at one time would have strained after us had we departed, and have longed earnestly to bear us company even in death, have become reconciled to our extinction, or have extinguished us voluntarily from their world of thought.

XX.

Philosophy is, perhaps, unequal to explain why the soul about to leave its tabernacle should refuse, as it were, to unfold its wings for flight, and cling to its old material stand on this bank and shoal of time. It should, methinks, be as little painful to us to die as to be born; and yet to bid an eternal farewell to the place of our affections, to the faces of our friends, our wives, our children, is a thing to which nature does not reconcile us. The survivors, who also have to follow in their turn, dismiss the parting guest, and take refuge from regret in business, amusement, or pleasure. The

weariness of the day, the sleep of night, act as pioneers of oblivion, and a few short weeks or days or even hours often suffice to restore the taste of life to those who sorrow.

Travellers, however, though partial like other people to strong emotions, have the excitement of action and novelty to preserve them from sadness.

We experienced no diminution of cheerfulness when entering on our visit to the tombs of the kings, but, on the contrary, rose early, ate a hearty breakfast, and mounted our beasts as gaily as if about to be admitted into the Harim of some living Pharaoh.

Take it altogether, it was the hottest day I ever remember. In many parts of the valley the thermometer stood at 120° in the shade. There was little wind, and the serene blue of that sky knows not what it is to be stained by a cloud.

Descending from our dwellings among the cliffs of Gournou, and turning towards the north, we proceeded along the edge of the cultivated country, and after riding for some time entered a narrow gap in the mountain leading towards the Libyan desert.

How the rays came down in that narrow and tortuous gorge! Vegetation had never extended its empire to the spot, which formed a part of the earth's skeleton, bare, rugged, smitten with eternal barrenness, the proper abode of desolation and death. On either hand, the grey slopes, covered

with loose stones and fragments of rock hot as the sides of an oven, and filled with the breath of a volcano, conducted the sight to the cœrulean firmament, which stretched over us in an arch of the brightest and most delicate blue.

Several of my companions complained of extreme languor, and once, at an elbow of a ravine, I feared that a friend had been struck by a coup de soleil. Advancing, however, was better than retreating, because shade and shelter were near at hand, and in a short time we stood before the entrance of the tombs.

> "Ye realms invisible to human sight,
> Ye gods that rule the regions of the night,
> Ye gliding ghosts, permit me to relate
> The mystic wonders of your silent state."

In the narratives of the Arabian Nights we are often conducted into subterranean palaces situated in places where man would never appear to have lived or laboured. The vision of their writer's fancy was here realized. A palace is often the tomb of all that is good in man, while in the East a tomb is often the palace of his greatest thoughts. A long flight of steps, a sloping corridor, painted gorgeously, though in dusky colours, crimson, purple, black, led to the lofty halls, saloons, galleries, shafts, passages, niches, chapels, which extending beyond each other, branching off to the right or left, descending, ascending, winding, carried us ultimately far into the bowels of the mountain.

Thebes may be said to be the Egypt of Egypt, and this the Thebes of Thebes. Everything in the valley dwindles in comparison with these stupendous sepulchres, which seem in truth worthy to be the portals of Amenti. Had they been erected above ground, the air would have corroded, and time destroyed them, but from these subterranean solitudes both air and time would appear to be excluded.

Of the forty-six regal tombs excavated in this lonely ravine, nineteen only have hitherto been discovered, so that twenty-seven remain with their paintings probably as fresh as they were four thousand years ago, with their coffins unrifled, their statues unbroken, and all the paraphernalia of death just as the Egyptians left it. Here we feel in all its force the poetry of that extinguished race, which, bridging the gulf between time and eternity, seemed to give them a firm footing in its shadowy dominions, and to reveal to them through the senses what takes place beyond the realms assigned to man.

XXI.

Here, at length, I appeared to be at home with Isis. On both sides the entrance is a statue of Silence, with its forefinger on its lips, to intimate apparently that the true inhabitants of those dusky palaces had passed the bourne from which no

traveller returns, and were forbidden to reveal anything to those not yet within the precincts of Amenti. All, therefore, from the very threshold becomes mystery and marvel.

A flight of black eagles, on the ceiling, precedes us, signifying, perhaps, that with their swift wings they bear the soul across the space between the two worlds. Once landed beyond the Stygian flood, all grows hushed and serene. Isis, above ground the goddess of productive love, here becomes, as it were, the intercessor for humanity; and while Osiris, her stern husband, seated on his throne, judges and absolves or condemns all the dwellers upon earth, she sits beside him, and with her face of benignity and beauty pleads earnestly for the children of men, pointing with her finger sometimes to Horus, the pledge of their union, lying in infant helplessness at her breast, sometimes with hands uplifted as in the attitude of supplication, imploring pardon for the dead.

Some may perhaps conceive that the paintings we behold on these sepulchral walls are only so many monuments of vanity, representing, as they frequently do, the triumphs of war or the fruits of state policy.

But may we not, without violence, discover in them a different signification? Perhaps the scenes we witness succeeding each other, like the different parts of a procession, are only meant to be material embodyings of the pictures delineated in fiery

and terrible brightness on the groundwork of conscience, as the soul stands before its supreme Judge.

Here the conqueror and subjugator of mankind appears with all his armies, marshalled in shadowy phalanxes behind him, engaged in deeds of violence or blood, sacking cities, piercing or hewing down their defenders, violating helpless women, trampling upon infants and children, or dragging troops of trembling slaves to the foot of their master's throne.

These acts, which we denominate good or bad according to the motive in which they originate, must be invested with their proper colours in Amenti. The shouts of crowds, the testimony of sycophants, the praises of historians, exert no influence there. Osiris, himself a king, extends no sympathy to those who usurp his name on earth, but weighs them like so many beggars in the balance, and rewards or punishes them according to their merits.

To him, the new city or colony founded, the furrows of a ploughed field, piles of golden sheaves, the opulence of the threshing-floor, well-clad men and women pouring forth their gratitude in temples, or children receiving the god-like gift of knowledge in schools, appear far more glorious trophies than the spoils of nations or the smoke of capital cities, ascending in baleful volumes and blackening the face of heaven.

XXII.

Everybody, I suppose, contrives to make some discovery while moving about the world. It is, in fact, by no means pleasant to travel from Dan to Beersheba, and find all barren. I determined, if possible, not to do this, and therefore rummaged about the old papyri at Thebes, till I fell in with a small Greek manuscript, which, upon examination, turned out to be one of the far-famed Milesian Tales.

But *omne ignotum pro magnifico;* I make no doubt that the Politeiai of Aristotle or the lost plays of Menander or Philemon, or even the history of Theopompos, would sadly disappoint us, should the researches of some antiquary bring them to light; and so it may prove with my Milesian Tale, which, however, I shall relate in the simple language of the original,* without the least attempt at ornament. :—

* The Author, in all likelihood a quaint and dreamy old Platonist, seems not to have been unversed in the graces of his mother tongue. I give the opening of the story as a specimen of his style :—

Ἐν τοῖς παλαιοτέροις χρόνοις ὅτε μάλιστα ηὐδοκιμεῖ ἡ τῶν Θηβαίων πόλις, ἱερεύς τις χρηστὸς κατῴκησεν ἐν τῷ χώματι τῷ μεγάλῳ τῷ τείνοντι εἰς τὴν τῶν Σφίγγων ἀγυιάν. Οὗτος ἀνὴρ, καίπερ ὢν πλούσιος, τῇ σωφροσύνῃ καὶ αὐταρκείᾳ

At the time when Thebes was at its glory it happened that an honest priest lived on the great terrace, looking out on the avenue of sphinxes. Though wealthy, he was a man of peculiar modesty, who, contented with the treasures left him by his forefathers, sought not to amass others, but devoted his time entirely to conversing with his wife, educating his only son, and alleviating the distress of the poor to the utmost extent of his means.

Contrary to his expectations, and also, it must be owned, to all probability, this procured him great honour during his lifetime, and at his death induced the ruler of the country to grant him a sepulchre in the valley of the tombs of the kings.

Every nation has its own method of expressing grief. The old Egyptians, it is well known, had theirs, and a very strange one it was; for instead of fasting, beating the breast, tearing the hair, and putting on sombre-coloured garments, they proceeded, at stated times, to the tombs of the deceased, where they feasted and caroused by way of keeping them in remembrance.

διέπρεπε. Ἥρκει γὰρ αὐτῷ τὰ κτήματα ἃ παρὰ τῶν πατέρων παρέλαβε, καὶ οὐδὲν πλέον αὐτοῖς προσθεῖναι ἐπεθύμησεν· ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦ παντὸς βίου διετέλει ἐπιτηδεύων τὴν σὺν γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ ὁμιλίαν, τὴν τοῦ μονογένους τέκνου παίδευσιν, τήν τε τῶν πενήτων εἰς δύναμιν βοήθειαν. κ. τ. λ.

Among a certain class of priests, none was permitted to perform this sacred duty, unless directly descended from them; so that when a man bequeathed to posterity no offspring, his ghost, as if by way of punishment for certain rites neglected, was obliged to wander in complete solitude through the chambers of his tomb.

The good priest Sophis, though a diligent worshipper of Athor, left behind him but one son, whose name was Amenophis, who having sincerely loved his father during his life-time, was afterwards proportionately assiduous in paying respect to his memory.

According to the laws regulating the forms of grief among the members of this sacerdotal caste, it was necessary that the son, or sons and daughters, if any, should celebrate the funeral feast once a-month. Exactly, therefore, on the first appearance of the young moon, Amenophis, having filled his basket with provisions and wine, proceeded alone at nightfall towards the valley of the tombs, the attendance of slaves not being permitted. Crossing the Nile at a ferry a little below the great temple of Ammon, and traversing a palm-grove which skirted the city wall on the northern side, he entered the dismal valley leading to his father's sepulchre.

XXIII.

In those days, two pillars of black marble, surmounted by the figure of a wolf, flanked the mouth of the gorge, which no attempt was made to beautify by architecture; naked, hungry, gloomy, it seemed to have been selected by nature, to form the avenue to the region of death.

Amenophis trod it with awe. From a jutting crag on the right, the owl hooted at him as he passed, while here and there a pair of threatening eyes glared at him from between the rocks. His lantern of paper, such as we see represented in the pictures on the walls, cast around a light like that of a large glow-worm, as panting and timid he passed amid wolves and jackals to a little door in the rock, which admitted him into the tomb.

Carefully shutting and locking it behind him, to prevent the intrusion of unwelcome visitors, he descended by many flights of steps to the banqueting hall, an apartment of considerable dimensions, fitted up in the usual style. A large stone divan, at least four feet high, with elegantly painted cornices and pillars, extended round it, and was covered with soft mattresses and cushions.

In the centre stood a large marble table richly carved and polished, and like the walls of the chamber, white, which supported a number of vases, filled once a-month with fresh flowers, while

chairs of sycamore-wood, more durable than the rock itself, were placed here and there around it.

Amenophis, on entering for the first time, felt extremely uncomfortable. Putting down his lantern, he hastened to kindle the lamps and tapers, as if there were some protection in the blaze of light. He then took forth his viands and his wine, and, sitting down, began to eat and drink, that he might thus cheer his spirits, and drive away those lugubrious thoughts, which the howl of the jackal without did not contribute to dispel.

Right opposite to where he sat, the portrait of his father was depicted on the wall; not in full flowing robes, as he used to appear to him when living, but naked, shivering, and ghastly pale, approaching with uplifted hands the terrible throne of Osiris.

Amenophis, as he fixed his eyes on the group, could scarcely be said to relish his supper; the bread stuck in his throat, and it was not until he had drunk four glasses, that he observed the sweet face of Isis smiling upon him, and bidding him be of good cheer, for that he also, in due time, should be admitted into her presence, and be happy. Amenophis's fears soon wore away, therefore, and having continued his potations till after midnight, he fell asleep, leaving his bottle half empty before him.

Next morning, having laid out on a sideboard a proper allowance of provisions for the ghost, with

any others that might be keeping him company, the young priest took up his basket, carefully locked the tomb after him, and returned to Thebes.

He continued his monthly visits regularly for some time, and in every other way exhibited a regard for his father's memory, which caused him to be much talked of among the members of his caste.

He became, likewise, a diligent student of all the mysteries and traditions connected with the worship of the gods, built at the bottom of his garden a chapel to Isis-Athor, and set up a small sphinx of black marble at the door.

Here he often spent the whole night in meditation, sometimes gazing in rapture at the full-bosomed statue of the goddess, sometimes allowing his thoughts to wander beyond the precincts of his dwelling, to where the beautiful daughters of Thebes were accustomed to walk in the summer evenings, on lofty terraces of hewn stone overlooking the majestic Nile.

XXIV.

One night having repaired as usual to the tomb, he sat down, and ate and drank, till he became quite merry, though alone. Death and he seemed now to be on good terms. He felt innumerable yearnings, on which he could bestow no name, and his dreams were perpetually of Athor.

On this occasion, presenting herself before him in light costume, and voluptuous attitude, she led him into a delicious garden, where from golden bowers and thickets of emerald, breathed forth musical airs, which intoxicated his senses.

Though deeply versed in the mystical philosophy of his nation, he could never explain to himself, even in broad day, the laws by which the vibrations of impalpable ether produce what we call sound; or how this, operating on our nervous system, awakens ecstasy in our souls; but a man rarely philosophizes in his sleep, though often as competent to do so as at any other time.

Amenophis, much more inclined to enjoy than to investigate, freely let loose his thoughts in the labyrinth of sound, carelessly wandering through which he found himself, Athor knows where, and emerged from his dream with a start.

Looking towards the other end of the table, he beheld a figure which perplexed him considerably. It was that of a young and beautiful woman dressed in white, an inhabitant doubtless of Amenti, come to cheer and console him.

His theory of spiritual existences was no doubt imperfect, since he could not persuade himself that either gods or ghosts were indifferent to good cheer; so, pushing the bottle and a goblet towards his guest, he beckoned with his head, and pointed with his finger, not thinking it becoming to address his phantom visitant in words.

The figure took the bottle, filled up the goblet, and drank, as it seemed, to the health of Amenophis, but remained strictly silent. Several times he would have risen from his chair, and approached a little nearer, but fear restrained him.

Not, I should observe, the unworthy apprehension that the spectre would do him evil, but an anxious solicitude that it might not vanish, and leave him in a solitude which he would now have considered doubly irksome.

He therefore remained where he was, but pushed after the wine a small silver basket of cakes, sweetmeats, and dried fruits, with jellies, and other delicacies.

The figure, admiring this sort of dumb show, did full justice to Amenophis's hospitality. Then rising, it poured out a goblet for the host, who, drinking it with great complacency and delight, shortly fell asleep.

XXV.

Towards morning Amenophis again awoke, and finding himself alone, did not at first doubt that the spirit he had seemed to behold formed a part of his dream; but observing the two goblets with still a little wine in them, and the plates and sweetmeats, and the fruit, he felt sadly perplexed, and returning to Thebes, related what had happened to his mother.

The old lady's curiosity was so much excited by the narrative, that she would certainly have broken the rules of their caste, and accompanied him, but that she was then suffering from a severe fit of the gout, which mercilessly confined her within doors. However, she counselled him to multiply his visits, and instead of once a-month, to proceed weekly to the tomb.

Amenophis, nothing loth, obeyed the commands of his mother, and repaired with strangely-beating heart to the scene of his vigils.

He ate, he drank, he sang that ancient song called "Maneros," the only one of his country of which history has preserved the name. He then dropped asleep as usual, and waking about much the same hour, found his fair companion seated at the table as before.

Familiarity, if it does not, in such cases, breed contempt, is sure to inspire courage, as the young priest found by experience. Instead, therefore, of remaining as formerly in his arm-chair, he arose, and filling a goblet with wine, advanced towards his fair visitant, and would have presented it to her, but that, with a shake of the head, and a wave of the hand, she forbade him.

Phantoms are always so dignified and authoritative, that few persons ever think of disputing their commands, however signified. Our sacerdotal young friend would have been the last person in the world to dispute their claims to obedience, so

he humbly reseated himself, satisfied with observing, that to eating and drinking she had evidently no objection.

The bottle now passed freely between them, the cakes and sweetmeats and other viands disappeared, and once or twice Amenophis imagined he could detect in the phantom's lips a tendency to smile or speak. But towards morning, yielding to his irresistible drowsiness, he fell asleep a second time, and next day found himself alone as before.

He once more returned home filled with strange thoughts. Had Isis herself taken compassion on him, and ascended from Amenti to people and beautify his dreams? He knew not. Yet the week seemed long, and was now filled but by one thought, that of the beautiful phantom which appeared to him in the tomb.

XXVI.

Months and months elapsed in this way, and Amenophis approached no nearer to an understanding with his visitor. He had often determined to remain awake all night and watch the exit of, he knew not what to call it, goddess or mortal.

But somehow, sleep invariably got the better of him, and the idea suggested itself to his mind that he might grow old and die before he could clear up the mystery.

He now became pensive and excited, and would

have passed his whole life in his father's tomb, had not his duties as a priest restrained him. He continued, however, his weekly visits, always resolving ere he went, not to return to Thebes without solving the enigma, but returning nevertheless quite as ignorant as he went.

His feelings experienced two or three strange revolutions. At first, the phantom terrified him, but finding its presence occasioned no evil, he grew reconciled, so that he might almost be said to be at his ease. But this state of mind did not continue long. From having been an object of something like indifference, the phantom seemed by degrees to have passed into his soul, and to fill it entirely. He could think of nothing else.

Was it really a spirit, or one of those existences in which the mortal and the immortal, the divine and the human, mingle together? Whatever it might be, Amenophis could not conceal from himself that it had become, as it were, his destiny, and that if deprived of this weekly vision, he should scarcely be able to support the aspect of this upper world, and must descend in search of it to the realms of Isis.

His mother, a shrewd old lady, to whom he always described faithfully the circumstances of each successive interview, at length, having well studied the case, gave him a piece of useful advice, which he resolved to follow.

Fortified with this counsel, he proceeded, there-

fore, to the tomb, spread his wine and delicacies on the table, ate, drank, and sang as usual, and then pretended to fall asleep, but kept one corner of his eye open. This he thought extremely clever, and he amused himself greatly by foreshadowing the pleasure he could not fail to experience at witnessing the entrance of the phantom, and the surprise it would certainly exhibit when it should find itself detected.

But poor Amenophis, though a priest, was scarcely yet a match for the people of the other world. His pleasant projects operated upon him like an opiate, so that while amusing himself with arranging his plans, he fell fast asleep; immediately after which, the phantom entered, and had him completely at its mercy. It had, no doubt, discovered by some means unknown, that the priest meant to make himself merry at its expense, and resolved to turn the tables on him.

It seems that pockets are an extremely old invention, probably one for which we are indebted to Isis herself, and in great request among her subjects. At any rate, this stray intelligence from the bowers of Amenti possessed one of these conveniences, and on the occasion in question had brought in it implements for painting or drawing. It also, for the first time, found its voice, and taking a sistrum, which, as good luck would have it, lay on one end of the marble divan, it touched the chords gently, chanted a delicious air, and to

add to the force of its fascination, engaged in a dance, probably with some invisible partner around whose neck it seemed occasionally to twine its arms.

In the midst of this exhibition, Amenophis awoke, and as might have been expected, felt not a little surprised. It seemed clear to him that he must be in high favour with the goddesses, and that he was to be transported to Elysium sooner or later, by the assistance of the majestic beauty before him. As she danced, he rose from his chair, and whenever her movements appeared more than usually graceful, clapped his hands and uttered exclamations of delight.

The dance being over, he invited the lady to be seated, poured out wine, handed her the sweetmeats, and would have placed himself beside her, but that, putting on a frown and waving her hand angrily, she forbade him.

Still Amenophis felt extremely happy, and as his companion, though she had sung, refused to talk, he resolved to make up for it, by talking a great deal himself, so he related his own history, and the history of his father, and as he proceeded, could observe that he often elicited a smile from his auditor.

At the conclusion, to express the extreme satisfaction he experienced, he sang a song, and in the excitement of the moment, leaping from his chair, performed a *pas seul*, which was so infinitely droll, that his guest, phantom as she was, could no

longer restrain herself, but burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

Amenophis took this to be a sign of approbation, so he continued to make antics, till the phantom appeared in danger of cracking its sides, upon which he desisted and resumed his seat.

He then received from its hands the customary goblet, and in spite of all his morning's determination, immediately fell asleep. The phantom then arose, and drawing near Amenophis, took off a garland of lotus-flowers from its head, and placed it upon his. It then kissed him upon the forehead, and murmuring some syllables of endearment, disappeared.

XXVII.

On awaking next morning, the young priest was infinitely angry with himself, especially when he found the lotus-garland on his brows, and returning home in an extremely ill-humour, related faithfully all that had happened to his mamma.

It could hardly be expected that she should compliment him on his wisdom, and accordingly she did very much the reverse, and I am sorry to confess, called him a dolt and a fool, expressions extremely undignified, particularly when addressed to a priest and one of the wise men of the East. Amenophis felt conscious that he deserved them, so made no reply, but bit his lips, and determined to be wiser next time.

He could now only be said to live one day, or rather one night, in the week. In the interval, he pretended indeed to study, and went through the routine of his duties, but he did both mechanically, and scarcely knew what had happened when he concluded.

There were, in those days, lunatic asylums at Thebes, and he sometimes shuddered as he passed by the doors, lest he should wake some fine morning, and find himself inside. His mind, however, was now made up. He would certainly be master of himself on his next visit to the tomb. And so he was, but for a reason which he had by no means anticipated.

While enjoying his supper, which he always appeared to eat with a peculiar relish, he used to entertain himself with looking at the pictures on the walls, and it now seemed to him that immediately behind the chair of the goddess Isis, he observed a new one, which had been painted there he knew not how.

All the laws of Egypt had been set at defiance in it. Instead of those quaint angular features with sharp chins and pointed elbows, such as in conformity with the sacerdotal theory the artists of the Nilotic Valley eternally reproduced, he beheld his own portrait exquisitely touched off, with his smooth chin and delicate moustachios, his large dark eyes and ample forehead, and beside him a female figure, which could be no other than the

phantom, full of joy and vitality, with the purple hues of youth upon her cheek, and all love's fire in her eyes. Her dark hair floated about her shoulders, and she was represented in the act of transferring the lotus garland from her own head to his. Above, in hieroglyphics, was a short inscription, which, alluding to the circle of the garland, said, "This is the ring that binds souls eternally together."

Amenophis was beside himself, and did not doubt that his celestial visitant from Amenti intended forthwith to assume flesh and blood, and become his wife. So he drained off goblet after goblet, and sang and danced, and in various other ways made a fool of himself, to the great edification of the phantom, if, in truth, she was there invisible.

But though he slept and waked, and slept and waked again, no figure appeared at the other end of the table; so when day-light came, he took up his basket and returned sorrowfully towards Thebes. No words from his mother could comfort him. He disdained repose; he neglected his studies; in order to escape from his sacerdotal duties, abstained from food, and affected to be ill, which he soon became in reality.

However, at the end of the week he recovered sufficient strength to repair to the tomb, where he ate and drank as if to make up for lost time, and wandered about and made all sorts of noises, as if to inform the phantom he was there.

But it was now sulky, and would not come, so Amenophis, next day, returned home sadder than ever, and this time really fell ill, and was brought, as the phrase is, to death's door. For several weeks he was incapable of proceeding to the valley, and the phantom, if it pleased, had it all to itself. When he recovered, however, the first thing he did, was to apparel himself in his most sumptuous raiment, and proceed to the sepulchre.

XXVIII.

As he entered the valley, the moon shone resplendently, casting sharply defined shadows from every projection and pinnacle. Once or twice a small fragment of floating mist appeared to be passing between the rocks, sometimes near his own track, sometimes far ahead of him. Music also of the sweetest kind floated several times through the air, so that Amenophis began to be persuaded that he should die that night, and that these sights and sounds were the precursors of those which would meet him on his entrance to Amenti.

He did not care, or rather he was eager to travel in any direction above or below, that would lead him into the presence of that figure, whose appearance had so long constituted the happiness of his life. He remembered the old saying, that they whom the gods love die young, and he welcomed

the idea, and hugged it to his soul, as the only balm of existence.

He entered the tomb, trembling with eager expectation; he descended, he kindled the lamps, until the whole banqueting-hall was one blaze of light. He then sat down, and rendered frugal and temperate by his illness, tasted only of those wines and dainties on which he had hitherto feasted profusely.

His mind had now attained the ascendency over his body, and he longed for that ambrosial nourishment which descends into the soul through the affections, and renders our existence like that of the gods. Sleep, therefore, was now far from him, though, sinking into his chair, he passed off as it were into one of those reveries which absorb our senses like slumber.

In the midst of this the figure entered, and seating itself at the table, awaited patiently the recognition of Amenophis. He became soon conscious of its presence, and passing to it the wine and the delicacies, they spent the evening as before—outwardly, I mean, for in the depths of his heart Amenophis was troubled and anxious, persuaded that this was the moment in which his fate must be decided, whether for life or death.

Pale at all times, the phantom appeared doubly pale this night. No approach to a smile illumined its countenance; some overpowering idea seemed to be at work within, an idea not of pain, but of

joy, too deep and powerful to be expressed by the usual signs. It therefore took refuge in agitation and tears; at least, the priest imagined that over those celestial cheeks drops of crystal descended and chased each other several times. At the conclusion of the banquet, the customary goblet was presented, but instead of drinking its contents, Amenophis poured them into his bosom, and affecting sleep, remained on the watch.

The phantom then approached, placed a garland of roses on his head, kissed his forehead, and retired, taking a small lamp in her hand. Amenophis followed at a short distance, and fortunately was unperceived. The phantom proceeded down one corridor after another, till, reaching the mouth of the well found in every tomb, it pressed slightly against a portion of the wall, which yielded to its touch, and permitted its entrance.

Amenophis darted forward, and seizing the figure in the narrow passage through which it was moving, earnestly besought it to speak. The mystery was in part at an end. The touch of flesh and blood satisfied the worthy priest that this was no phantom, but a woman, and while she stood apparently hesitating, he gained courage, and taking her in his arms, bore her back into the banqueting-hall. There she found her voice, and said to him:—

"I am a princess and a priestess of Athor. My sire, a descendant of the ancient kings, is interred

in the next tomb, and observing thy piety, my curiosity led me to do what I have done. I am in thy power, Amenophis, and it will depend on thee whether my name shall pass down unsullied to posterity, or be esteemed of lightly, and made a jest and an opprobrium in Egypt."

"The pious in one relation," answered Amenophis, "are pious in all. I revere thee as I revere the goddess whose priestess thou art, but, by the soul of Osiris, thou shalt be mine! The gods have given thee to me, and our nuptials shall be celebrated in the sight of all the people of Thebes."

Many things more the priest said to her, and she consented, and they emerged from the tomb just as the first blush of dawn was reddening the eastern sky. Instead of descending the valley, they ascended it, talking pleasantly together, and giving utterance to some of those hopes and fears, which in all ages and countries have agitated the human breast.

The path they chose, now rough and hard to climb, was then disposed into terraces and flights of steps, which led them to a spacious platform, among the summits of the Libyan mountains, whence the eye could command at one glance a view of the whole mighty capital of Egypt, with its towering walls, its hundred propylæa, its temples, palaces, obelisks, sphinxes, courts, and gardens, to be invested with splendour by the rising sun.

Here rose the vocal Memnon, there the mighty granite statue of Osymandias, towering beside the Memnonium like some god slumbering on his throne. Further towards the east, amidst groves of palm-trees, stood the stupendous temple of Ammon, with its forest of columns, its majestic portals, its spacious courts, its avenues and its colossal figures becoming every instant more distinct in the growing light.

Flowing from south to north, from Hermontis towards Tentyris, the broad Nile poured along its waters, reflecting distinctly the long suite of majestic edifices which bordered it on either side. Up to this moment the living crowd remained at rest within their dwellings, so that as the sun burst up from behind the eastern mountains and poured its floods of crimson light through squares, streets, and avenues, it appeared to be kindling into momentary existence a cloud-city, too vast and magnificent to be created by mortal hands.

Amenophis and the princess could not repress an impulse of pride as they looked down upon their native place, which to them was thenceforward to be a scene of joy. They descended towards it with beating hearts, they passed the Memnonium, they traversed the Nile, and in the grand court of the temple of Athor pledged their troth to each other, in presence of their friends and relatives, who rent the air with their acclamations at the joyful event; and as long as Thebes endured,

thé names of Amenophis and his phantom bride were familiar to its youth and maidens.

XXIX.

In the tombs of Eilithyias there is a picture representing a banquet, which, properly studied, may serve to justify one of our Theban achievements, which, with the reader's permission, I will describe. Nothing can be more certain than that the Egyptians were in the habit of making themselves merry in tombs. Even at their most gorgeous feasts they introduced and passed from guest to guest the figure of a mummy, and converted it into a motive for feeding luxuriously and drinking deep.

"Enjoy yourselves while you may," was the injunction of the mimic corpse, "for to-morrow you may be like me."

Without having thé slightest idea of imitating these philosophical gentlemen, we resolved to enjoy a grand dinner in the Tombs of the Kings, and to render the entertainment more complete, our host invited a company of dancing-girls, to amuse us by their performances. The sepulchre consisted of a suite of apartments, several of them lofty, with many rows of immense pillars, which supported the weight of the mountain. When lighted up at night with lamps and wax tapers, these halls of death assumed a splendid and mysterious appear-

ance, their dimensions being so great as to leave some portion of them always enveloped in shadow. The table was laid out between the columns, with strings of small lamps suspended in festoons over head.

The dishes were numerous, the covers of silver, the decanters of cut crystal, and all the other appurtenances such as the old subjects of Rameses might have envied.

What the delicacies consisted of, Heaven knows. Disguised by the cookery of the East, I may, for aught I can tell, have that night eaten a crocodile. It is certain that the wood of coffins was burnt in the kitchen to boil our vegetables, among which were large cauliflowers, the most delicious I have ever tasted.

Wines of France, Italy, and Spain, sparkled on the board, and the guests, full of health and animal spirits, forgot they were carousing in a sepulchre, and laughed, and joked, and sang joyous songs, as if Egypt had been restored to political and social vitality, and we had met to celebrate the happy event.

Here and there in the back-ground were large painted coffins, in which several Egyptian ladies awaited the revolution of the Great Year. Had it occurred that night, how, on lifting up their embroidered wrappers and painted coffin-lids, would they have been startled to behold a number of barbarians from the north drinking champagne at their beds' feet!

What my friends felt, I cannot take upon me to say, but I confess that my own sensations became now and then extremely unpleasant, as I contrasted our revelry with the ensigns hung out by the King of Terrors, to intimate his irresistible dominion over us.

But presently the Awalim and Ghawazi entered from a distant chamber, where they also had been regaling themselves. It appears to be generally believed that these girls drink brandy before commencing their performances, and in many cases, perhaps, they may, though I must do them the justice to say they never did so on any occasion when they exhibited before me. They confined themselves to coffee, and trusted to their health and animal spirits to carry them through the physical efforts which constitute in most cases a large portion of their dances.

XXX.

In the present instance two young and elegantly-formed Ghawazi, having reduced their costume to a dress of gauze, and buckled a broad girdle about their waists, to enable them to go without injury through the violent efforts sometimes required by the nature of their performances, stepped forward, and commenced a pantomime of which I cannot expect that my description will convey an adequate idea.

The story of the piece may be related briefly. A jealously-watched princess has, by the exercise of a thousand ingenious arts, contrived, at length, to triumph over the policy of the Harim, and enjoy an interview with her lover.

She is first seen waiting anxiously for his approach, she rises from the divan, she goes to the lattice, she listens, she turns pale, she trembles. Hope then takes the place of despair: her cheeks are flushed, she sings to herself a song of love; a footstep is heard, the lover appears, they utter an exclamation of joy, and rush into each other's arms.

The dance then assumes a character less in conformity with our tastes and notions. The performers develop by attitudes, movements, and glances, the ideas predominant in their minds at the time, and the songs of the Awalim fill up the system of interpretations necessarily left imperfect by the most skilful and accomplished dancers.

XXXI.

To this succeeded the celebrated dance of the Bee. One of the Ghawazi who had hitherto kept in the background, now came forward, and while the music assumed a wild and animating character, entered at once on the startling pantomime. She imagines herself in the gardens of Syria, her native country, and while wandering among trees,

flowers, and fountains, to have detected the hum of a bee somewhere in the folds of her dress.

She starts—she displays alarm—she listens—she shudders—and affecting to discover the tiny foe in her pelisse, detaches it from her person and casts it aside. The bee, whose hum is imitated by the music, is now supposed to have entered her vest, and to be creeping about her bosom. The agitation of her countenance, the tremors of her frame increase, the vest is unbuttoned, and with marks of trepidation taken off and thrown from her.

At this stage of the proceeding, the spectators begin to divine what is to follow. The chemise, the trowsers, the drawers, are each in turn suspected of harbouring her little enemy, and ingeniously escaped from, amid a multitude of graceful movements, which allure forward the eye and the fancy; every gesture and every attitude only serving as harbinger to others more elegant and seductive.

The transitions from point to point are scarcely perceived, till the dancer at length stands before you in the unsophisticated costume of our mother Eve. But her dismay is not yet over. Her winged persecutor, concealed in the long grass, and indicating his presence by angry murmurs, endeavours to sting her feet, and to escape from him, she springs backward and forward or bounds into the air.

Resolved on victory, he once more ascends, and buzzing fiercely, attempts to alight now upon her neck, now upon her bosom, her face, her limbs, and to elude him, she waves her person now on one side, now on another, stooping, rising, advancing, retreating, sometimes spreading her hands before her face, sometimes placing them in the attitude of the Venus de Medici. In vain; the bee presses her more closely, and all her arts and contrivances being exhausted, she takes refuge in flight, and darts suddenly out of the apartment.

It should be observed, that the Ghawazi during this strange exhibition did not at all appear to be conscious there were any lookers-on, but threw herself completely into the situation, and, therefore, rendered her performance infinitely less objectionable than it would otherwise have been. Her figure besides was fair, delicate, and finely proportioned, her countenance girlish and innocent, and her black hair so profuse and long, that, when let loose, it fell about her almost like a veil.

Meanwhile the Awalim proceeded with their songs, the sense of which, expressed in highly figurative and mystic language, often escaped me. Upon the whole, the ideas of the poets would seem to have resembled those of Hafiz and Jami, that is to say, were sentimental and voluptuous, with a dash of wild energy borrowed from the inspiration of Suffeism.

XXXII.

Existence in the abstract, what is it? To be, is to feel and to know that you are. Existence, therefore, may be defined as a conscious idea, a thing blessed with the knowledge that it is. All other existences are rather imaginary than real, so that if the whole material universe could be blotted out at once, leaving behind the feeling, thinking, and impassioned essences, nothing would be lost but the phenomena which constitute, as it were, the apparatus for generating sensation and thought.

God is an infinite idea, originating and encircling everything; but finite existences are only so many shadows, more or less brilliant or beautiful, passing over this infinite and eternal mirror, from which they were originally thrown forth, and in which they will ultimately be absorbed, not however, as we hope, to the extinction of individual consciousness.

What we say when we speak of God, does not proceed from ordinary reasoning, but from a perception of truth, arrived at over the head, as it were, of logic. The mind has, in fact, an action superior to all technical rules, which leads it to discover truths inaccessible to formal science. We know that God is, by a sort of double consciousness,—that is, a consciousness of the infinite engrafted upon our own; there is an affinity between

spirits, and our finite activity implies an infinite activity, from which it flowed as a stream from its source.

Some one, I believe, has said, I am; therefore God is; perceiving the necessary connexion between the finite and the infinite. All things exist in God—intelligence, thought, matter, passion. The laws which regulate existence are unknown to us, and, therefore, it surpasses our intelligence to conceive how, when the universe began to be, a struggle immediately commenced between order and disorder, or harmony and discord. Light, also, and darkness became antagonistic, and on the latter was bestowed the name of Evil—Typhon, Ahriman, Siva—because it stands between us and the perception of all silent existences external to ourselves.

Upon this, conceived as the principle of deprivation, the orientals have sometimes bestowed a separate consciousness,—that is, personified and invested with attributes, and elevated into the antagonist of the opposite principle. They have proceeded to exile it to some unknown region of space, whence it is supposed to issue with untiring energy to deface and mar the productions of the good principle. Over the whole world this notion has prevailed more or less. Finite creatures are accounted excellent or otherwise in proportion as they appear to cooperate with the productive and preserving, or with the destructive principle.

Out of this idea, infinitely modified, have sprung nearly all the religions of the East, which are still, when profoundly studied, found to be pervaded by the same spirit, amalgamated with more or less of the forms of error. A thorough conviction of this truth would produce universal toleration. As it is, the partisans of one idea, of which they constitute themselves in some sort the guardians, experience a strange hostility towards the partisans of other ideas, whom they persecute and put to death, with the intention apparently of ensuring their happiness beyond the grave.

To accomplish this purpose, what a pandemonium has the world been sometimes made! Men have caught each other, and mutually inflicted and suffered the most unheard-of torments, not apparently comprehending how impossible it is to transfer the idiosyncrasies of one individual to another.

If I prefer sugar to salt, I may as well put the man to death who prefers salt to sugar, as the believer in the Koran the believer in the Talmud. Yet look at the history of the world, and we shall find that from the beginning up to the present hour, men have fought and suffered martyrdom for their ideas, about which their positiveness and obstinacy are always in exact proportion to their ignorance.

"For some have worshipp'd rats, and some
For that Church suffer'd martyrdom."

A man conceives a notion, and along with it the desire to transplant it into the minds of his neighbours. So long as he depends on persuasion for success, he soothes and coaxes them; but when his partisans have become sufficiently numerous, he adopts a shorter method with the obdurate, and converts them with fire and sword.

We Christians have also, unfortunately, too many examples of this; but the one which presents itself to my mind at this moment is that of Cardinal Caraffa, who, having obtained from the Pope leave to establish the Inquisition at Rome, at a time when the resources of the state ran low, turned his private property to the use of his zeal, and set up a small Inquisition at his own expense.

We must imagine the charitable fanatic, therefore, purchasing a house in some obscure street, repairing to it with workmen, and there employing himself day and night in watching the process of setting up racks, pulleys, screws, wheels, cauldrons for heating oil and melting lead, and all those other ingenious devices by which Rome has undertaken to convince the world that God may be eaten in the shape of a wafer.

XXXIII.

Will the reader pardon me if I exhibit a trait of personal vanity? When I arrived at Thebes I had one of the handsomest beards in the world;

black as jet, and descending in curls and waves over my breast. This was a great recommendation to me among the Arabs, and I fear I must attribute to it much of the influence I possessed over them. Often and often, while passing along the streets of Gournou, Karnak, and Luxor, the women and the old men, as they sat on the stone mastabah beside their doors, would exclaim to each other, "Wallah—by God, has not he a beard!"

My object, however, in alluding to this subject is not so much to celebrate my own beard, which has gone long ago to the tomb of all the Capulets, as to introduce a remark on beards in general. Here, in the moist climates of Europe, my beard, which I wore for some years, was lank, straight, and, therefore, unsightly.

It continued so while crossing the Mediterranean, but no sooner had I landed in Egypt than it began to curl, and exhibit a crispness and a strength it had never possessed before. This may, in part, be explained by my improved health, but chiefly by the dryness of the atmosphere; and it seems probable that this, operating through thousands of years, in conjunction, perhaps, with other causes not yet known to us, may have produced the woolly head of the negroes.

Be this as it may, I am an admirer of beards, and imagine they were given to men to be worn. On their various uses much might be said; but, in Cairo, it is one great recommendation that they

enable you to distinguish a man from a woman, which the Turks often fail to do.

But I must linger no longer at Thebes. A thousand attractions still lie before me, and, as everybody knows, it is infinitely pleasant to proceed to "fresh fields and pastures new." Besides, to confess the truth, if there were some pleasant persons there were likewise several bores at Thebes, the descendants, probably, of Amenophis, who made blunders perpetually, and, above all things, mistook the way to render themselves agreeable; so Vere and I secretly determined to leave them, and one morning, considerably before day, set sail with a fair wind and hurried on towards the tropics.

We were now approaching that part of the Nile in which crocodiles attain their greatest size, and where, therefore, their king—Sultan Et-Tim-Sah—is supposed to dwell. His majesty and we being at war, we constantly endeavoured to kill and carbonado one or two of his subjects for breakfast, though, unfortunately, without success.

On arriving in Egypt I had fully made up my mind to eat a crocodile, which was the case also with Vere; but, being exceedingly crafty, they contrived to defeat all our stratagems. One morning, however, I came into much closer contact with one of these awkward gentlemen than appeared pleasant at the time.

Walking out before sun-rise on a long sandy

island, separated from the main by a channel somewhat narrow though deep, I noticed one of the king of the crocodile's body-guards poking his head above water, just to observe whether or not the air was too cool for a promenade. By the wicked twinkle of his eye, I judged that he saw me, and, thinking discretion the better part of valour, I retreated somewhat hastily towards the boat, leaving the honours of the field to my long-tailed friend.

XXXIV.

At the same time it is but just to allow that it is only on rare occasions they attack bipeds.

Sir James Brooke informs me that the alligators of Borneo are far less scrupulous. They will kill men and swallow them whole; and he says that his people, on ripping one open, found in his stomach a poor Dyak, very little the worse for keeping, who, with his vest and canvass trowsers on, had lain in that strange cemetery for upwards of a fortnight.

The crocodiles of Egypt are more delicate in their tastes, for though they will devour children, or even women, they seem to entertain an objection to eating men, whom they probably find difficult of digestion.

Just before our arrival an Arab girl, who had descended to the Nile for water, was just stooping to fill her pitcher when a crocodile struck her with

his tail, and, tumbling her into the river, walked off with her into his den, where he devoured her at his leisure.

Out of revenge for such practices we endeavoured to get some crocodile steaks for breakfast; but, after firing at them incessantly, found it to be of no avail, and ultimately we departed from the land of the Pharaohs without having once tasted that delicacy. But *en revanche*, as our neighbours say, we shot and ate a siksak, the trochilos of Herodotus, a sort of gentleman-in-waiting on the crocodile, about which history and tradition tell strange stories.

What they say is this,—that the crocodile being too much addicted to live in water with his jaws open, allows a number of leeches to creep down his throat, where, vigorously sucking his blood, they prove extremely troublesome. Against these enemies, however, he finds a faithful ally in the siksak, which as soon as he perceives, he opens his delicate mouth, and the bird, rendered bold by instinct, leaps, like another Curtius, into the gulf, not to be swallowed up however, but to swallow.

He kills and devours the leeches, and then, hopping out, receives the thanks of the crocodile. Sometimes, this lumbering animal, getting sleepy during the process, mechanically closes his jaws so as to deprive his little friend of air; upon which, extending his wings, furnished with sharp spikes on the tops of the shoulders, he wounds the croco-

dile's throat, and reminds him that it is his business to be civil.

For the truth of the story I will not answer, but certain it is that these birds have the sharp spike on the wings, and that I seldom, perhaps never, saw a crocodile without a siksak standing close beside him on the sand, evidently within his reach, but without his exhibiting the slightest desire to molest or injure it. The bird is about the size of a dove, beautiful of plumage, and very good eating.

XXXV.

Once, I thought that the stainless blue of the skies on the upper Nile would never tire. But there is, apparently, nothing here below so delightful as change. To-day, therefore, I observed with pleasure a new feature in the firmament, where a few cloudy streaks, apparently at immeasurable heights, traversed the cœrulean ether, looking like so many tiny snow-drifts, blown by the breath of Jove from the summit of Olympos.

Everybody knows what is meant by a mackerel-sky, which will give some idea of the appearance I now admired. The vapour was disposed in patterns of silver shells, with narrow intervals of deep azure between them; and when the sun rose, all this cold and delicate mosaic was converted at once into glowing and crimson fretwork, streaked and edged with gold.

The valley itself was beginning to assume new

features. At short intervals along the banks, too high to be covered during the inundation, was the rude apparatus of the Shadoof, or bucket and pole, by which the peasant raises water for irrigating his fields. Villages, looking beautiful from a distance, lay thickly embosomed in palm-groves, while copses of mimosas, tamarisks and willows, fringed the margin of water-courses, or marked the utmost limits of the cultivated country. Here, we also observed large plantations of the Kharwah, or castor-oil shrub, in form so graceful and elegant, that if practicable it ought to be introduced into the ornamental grounds of Europe.

XXXVI.

Late in the evening we arrived at Esné, and in order to examine the ruins of the great temple, remained there till next day. Nothing, however, wearies sooner than descriptions of antiquities, though in actually examining them there is a perpetually renewed pleasure; but perhaps the chief interest arises from the hope experienced by every traveller, that to him it may be given to interpret the mysteries which have baffled the ingenuity of his predecessors.

He pores, therefore, over group after group, endeavours to fix the signification of symbols, to trace a connexion between scattered figures, and to follow the genesis of those ideas which, springing from one single root, branched forth in the minds

of the Egyptians into a vast system of philosophical theology.

Of course it was found impracticable to represent more than the elemental notions in painted sculpture, for which reason we observe Isis and Osiris eternally reproduced, preparing to become the progenitors of their future worshippers.

But we are perplexed by the combinations everywhere beheld on the walls. Heaven seems to mingle with earth, gods with men, men with animals, stars, rivers—things existing and things imaginary blend, unite, separate, but the key being lost, we can only contemplate with amazement the vast wilderness of types and symbols, realities and allegories, before which we stand.

To this town, the Pasha banished the Ghawazi and Awalim of Cairo, though the number of them always seemed amply sufficient. In the bazaars and public places they mixed freely with the modest women, who, so far as I could discover, experienced no reluctance to converse with them. What renders them necessary, it is difficult to ascertain, but in all ages of the world, from the most savage to the most civilized, we discover traces of this sisterhood, whom a certain class of writers appear to think it a mark of virtue to vilify and persecute.

It would seem more in harmony with the spirit we profess, to treat them with lenient charity. How much of what is wrong in them might, by a

superior intelligence, be traced to the defective organization of society, is what, of course, I cannot determine; but it seems to me, that we first corrupt and degrade women, and then, by a refinement of baseness and cruelty, thrust them beyond the pale of social life, treat them as outcasts, declaim against their immoralities, and in true pharisaical temper ostentatiously thank God that we are not as they are.

XXXVII.

To supply ourselves with certain provisions which were government monopolies, we repaired to the Fort, where two or three pieces of artillery, rusty and antiquated, overawe the passers up and down the Nile. Here, as elsewhere, all actual public business bordering on a commercial character was performed by Kopts,—men in black pelisses and turbans, with yellow complexions and coarse features, who are said to excel in arithmetic and in the mystery of frying fish.

They were at dinner when we entered, and, in the spirit of hospitality borrowed from the Arabs, invited us to join them, which we did, and probably, during the repast, tasted some of the Latus, or sacred fish, that for centuries before the Christian era shared with Bouto the worship of the inhabitants of this primitive city.

The severe critics of ancient religions often

profess themselves unable to understand by what perversion of theological reasoning the old Egyptians came to offer adoration to certain animals. But to believers in Pantheism, nothing could be more rational. According to this theory, the divinity is nothing but the universal principle of life, which, whether comtemplated apart from all form, or in the concrete, as immersed in various modifications of matter, is still the same.

Reverence accordingly appeared due to everything connected with the transmission of life, to the celestial energy in which it originated, to the channels through which it flowed, to the accidents which turned aside its stream for a while, or caused it to conceal itself, like certain rivers, beneath the phenomenal stratum of existence, to emerge again at some other point more glorious and powerful than ever. Animals, inasmuch as they have life, are all divine according to the principles of this philosophy, as when they absorb or interpenetrate each other, devour or are devoured, they in reality only transpose portions of the same substance, mingle together afresh—the active and the passive principles, disorganizing some forms, reorganizing others, but occasioning in reality neither loss nor gain to the sum total of existence, which must remain the same to all eternity.

In this theory we may discover the reason why to an Egyptian the idea of worshipping a crocodile or an onion appeared quite as philosophical as wor-

shipping the sun or the stars, or any other portions of matter, large or small. In each case it was the metaphysical idea that acted on the mind.

In the idolatry of passion men are said to adore women, and in the quaint paganism of India, the Brahmans offer a strange worship to the female form. The ancient Egyptians, unbounded in the lavishness of their devotion, comprehended within its circle the greater part of living things, and might without inconsistency have included the whole.

XXXVIII.

The weather was now extremely beautiful. The sun rose and set in unclouded splendour, or if a few clouds sometimes appeared, they were merely thin streaks of silvery haze, which showed off more strongly by contrast the rich deep blue of the firmament. The nights, likewise, were singularly lovely. The moon's light, descending through an atmosphere of great purity, which became clearer in proportion as we were more closely hemmed in by the desert, resembled a pale sunshine, and the stars, many of which are invisible in Europe, shone with superior brilliance and lustre.

Venus, then the evening star, when seen in the deep violet sky of sunset, had a liquid brightness and beauty which well entitle her to be the representative of the Queen of Heaven.

Night, still everywhere, is doubly so here. If

you ascend any small eminence soon after dusk, you behold the lights of numerous villages twinkling often between the palm-trees, but these signs of life soon disappear, and nothing remains to remind you of being in an inhabited country, but the barking of the village dogs, answering each other from a distance.

XXXIX.

In this part of the river the points of interest crowd thickly upon the traveller, who, to court the assistance of the winds, is sometimes compelled to defer till his return his visits to certain places. This I did with regard to the grottoes of Eilithyias.

It was drawing towards evening when we landed on the neighbouring plain, almost entirely deserted and covered thickly with ruins. The mountains, here wild and irregular, were separated from each other by dark gorges running out into the desert. Through these, late in the evening, immense troops of gazelles, fleet and timid, descend tremblingly towards the Nile to drink. Feeling they have passed the boundaries of their own domain, and come among the dwellings of man, they glance around with their large, liquid eyes, and at the first sound take to flight.

But in these scarcely inhabited places, they are seldom disturbed, so that if the traveller conceals

himself behind a rock, whence he can observe without being discovered, he may see these gentle denizens of the wilderness flocking down the rocky gorges in thousands, their horns thrown back, their ears erect, and their nostrils turned up as if to scent the approach of the first enemy.

Once on the plain, they dart like arrows towards the river, where it is pleasant by the moon's rays to see their little heads bent down as they inhale the refreshing stream, and fortify themselves for the heat and fatigue of twenty-four hours, since they can generally drink but once during that time.

The operation being over, they start, ascend the bank, and with rapid and joyous bounds fly back towards the desert, where alone they consider themselves in safety.

In many parts of the valley the Arabs raise at the entrance of these gorges small semi-circular parapets of loose stones, behind which they crouch with their loaded muskets. When the flocks of gazelles come within range, all the party lying in ambush fire at once, and a number of these beautiful animals immediately lie stretched in death upon the rocks. The remainder retreat with inconceivable speed towards their natural home, where they endure the thirst of two days, rather than venture again into the treacherous neighbourhood of man.

XL.

As we approached the rocks of Eilithyias, the owl, perched high among their pinnacles, hooted us a welcome, inspiring our Arab attendants with extremely disagreeable apprehensions. Suliman, turning to me, in a voice pitched purposely low, as if he feared being overheard by the owl, observed that it was an evil bird, and that in his opinion it would be better to return to the boats, and resume the visit by day; but we had a different theory of the owl, and were rather pleased than otherwise to hear her familiar voice, redolent of old England, as it rang and echoed among the precipices.

It was not without some difficulty that we discovered the entrance to the grottoes, where the ancient Egyptian inhabitants of Eilithyias lie comfortably in the guise of mummies, awaiting the revolution of the great year, when they are to return to life, and make their way again through all its delicious pains and pleasures.

At the mouth of the grotto, drawing forth our flint and steel, we struck a light and kindled our wax tapers, with which, like Popish priests in a procession, we commenced perambulating the dimensions of these subterranean palaces of death.

We were accompanied, besides Suliman, by several Arabs, among whom was my friend Mohammed; and these honest children of Ishmael,

having learned we were moving through sepulchres, took it into their heads to suppose that the paintings they beheld on the walls represented faithfully what takes place in Amenti.

Among the things portrayed were boats bearing dead bodies, filled with priests, and dragged forward with cords by men walking along the banks. With these it was quite natural our boatmen should identify themselves. Turning to me, Mohammed observed with a voice in which resignation was mingled with sadness:—

"So, then, the poor Arabs are compelled to track and toil even in the other world!"

"Be of good cheer, Mohammed," I replied, "the persons there represented are not Muslims, but Infidels."

People of colder and more cautious temperament may despise the Arabs for their readiness to believe what is told them, to confide in every man whom they suppose to be gifted with superior knowledge, and to credit even the illusions of art. I rather envy them, and would gladly bring myself into a state of mind analogous to theirs.

Faith is the source of all the unmixed happiness of this world.

What constitutes the felicity of children, but that they believe in all things, that they accept appearances for realities, that they make no inquiries into causes, but, trusting lovingly in their parents, are led forward through the paths of life

by the hand without the slightest forethought or suspicion? The Arabs, for the most part, are mere children, whose fertile imaginations people the world with marvels and mysteries, and lay down a firm causeway of faith, over which the soul may pass from this stage of being to the next.

Compared with theirs, the faith of the most enthusiastic European is cold and sceptical—what they know seems less real to them than what they believe. With Berkeley, they treat the material world as a thing much less probable than the spiritual, which does not, however, hinder them from enjoying, when in their reach, all the pleasures of physical existence.

When I transport myself back and contemplate with the mind's eye the figure we cut in those secluded tombs, I cannot greatly wonder that the fancy of so simple a people should have been inflamed. We formed altogether a group of ten or twelve men, some fair, some swarthy, some almost black, bearded or unbearded, with varied and grotesque costumes, each with a taper in his hand, except, perhaps, myself, who carried instead a pencil and a note-book.

Gay as we naturally were, we could not altogether forget we were breathing the air of sepulchres. As we moved, therefore, from one dark hall to another, we often became silent, and still more so when we stood before the mystic paintings interspersed with hieroglyphics, and strove to make

out the import of the whole. Sometimes I remained in the rear of the party, and saw them pass away from hall to hall, each with his taper kindling up a portion of the space around him, like a peasant moving with his lantern over a dark field at night.

The figures of my companions, as the candle-light fell over them, looked at times infinitely strange and grotesque, and a group of faces turned towards the painted walls and thus illuminated, now suggested ludicrous ideas, and now very sad and gloomy ones.

And what did we see there? Scenes of festivity, banquets, music, dancing, interspersed with pictures representing the serious and solemn business of life. I scarcely remember to have noticed anywhere in Egypt paintings more interesting, since many of them might be said to lay open to us the internal economy of an Egyptian family. The husband and wife, seated side by side, were entertaining numerous guests, and their amusements and pastimes very much resembled those witnessed there among the wealthy at the present day.

XLI.

Certain antiquarians, who may be said to have taken the old Egyptians under their protection, often make the most ludicrous efforts to discover among them proofs of a civilization in character and spirit resembling our own, when we choose to

idealize what we think and do, and make myths, as it were, of our feelings and opinions.

But we first dissemble to ourselves the true nature of existing society, and then, looking back upon antiquity, exhibit a puerile eagerness to discover indications of a system of manners similar to that which we attribute to our contemporaries. But to establish this view, we must destroy or forget all the monuments the Egyptians have left us.

An industrious writer labours, for example, to attribute to the Egyptians European manners and morals, for the purpose, probably, of rendering them more popular in the north. He describes them as eminently decorous, particularly the priests; denies that it was customary among them for women to dance naked, since such a spectacle, he thinks, would not have been tolerated by a people so polished and refined.

But all history and the monuments lead to the contrary conclusion. On the walls of both tombs and temples, we discover innumerable female figures without the slightest indication of drapery, sometimes suffering punishment, sometimes moving in religious processions, sometimes engaged in domestic duties, sometimes dancing.

Among the Greeks, who had certainly made greater progress in refinement than the Egyptians, we find proofs of the same manners; and even the Roman ladies, in their tunics of gauze and fine muslin, which Petronius compares to woven wind,

could scarcely be regarded as clothed. Even in modern times, it is rather our climate than our civilization that has led to the adoption of a different taste, since, from the low dresses always fashionable in England, and generally also in France, it is perfectly clear the people are willing to dispense, as far as possible, with clothing, nor in certain stages of society is any impropriety attached to appearing naked.

I saw hundreds of men working in the Delta without a rag of clothes on, and at the village of Maharaka in Nubia, witnessed a dance among young modest Muslim women, which the old pagans of the Nile could not have surpassed.

It was a little after dark when we landed in search of guides to conduct us to some distant ruins. As we entered the village, we heard sounds of rude music, and an immense amount of shouting and laughter, and presently, on approaching an open space, saw about sixty or seventy young women, naked as they were born, dancing round a large fire with their fathers and mothers, brothers, perhaps, husbands, with all the children of the village arranged in a merry circle about them.

We stopped for a moment to look on. They did not, as might be expected, attempt any very easy or graceful attitudes, but like the Spartan girls of old, courted applause by violent bounds or gestures, springing as high as they could into the air, and cutting all sorts of ludicrous capers with their arms and legs.

There was not, as far as I could observe, the slightest approach to indecency, but mere rude, primitive mirth. On discovering the presence of strangers, they vanished into the darkness, and returned shortly afterwards draped in such garments as they possessed, to accompany us with their friends to the ruins.

Now, if Mahomedan women, in any stage of society, can be found to dispense with all sorts of garments, it is perfectly credible that the pagans of ancient Egypt should have been at least equally regardless of what we denominate decorum.

At any rate, there are their monuments, not only to prove that this was the case, but that they were altogether destitute of what we understand by the word decency. Their ideas on most points of morals and manners were different from ours, and it will be for philosophers to decide whether we have advanced or retrograded.

XLII.

It has hitherto been found impracticable, with the joint aid of history and the monuments, to form a satisfactory idea of married life in Egypt. According to some, the woman was all-powerful, in deference to Isis, who, in the theory of the philosophers, would seem to have been only the deification of the abstract idea of womanhood, or the spirit of feminine love.

But if such was the aim of the Egyptian insti-

tutions, practice would seem never to have answered the original beau-ideal. Everywhere, on the contrary, we behold the male sex predominant, enacting cruel punishments against their weaker companions, and executing them with rigour and ferocity.

There ought, I am aware, to be no infusion of gallantry into the laws of a country, whose regulations should be framed in the way best calculated to promote the happiness of the whole. But it may be doubted whether society is ever improved by inflicting corporal punishment on women, who, as the mothers of the community, ought, it appears to me, even when they err or commit crimes, to be treated with a reverence due to the maternal character.

When a woman proves by her actions that she has forgotten what is due to her sex, men must doubtless consent to see her put under restraint, and thus withheld from repeating her offences; but if my view of civilization be correct, society will never deserve to be regarded as refined, civilized, or humane, till it ceases to inflict infamous or cruel punishments on women.

Should this lead to the abolition of capital punishment altogether, it cannot be helped; my theory does not proceed so far, though if an opinion more humane than mine should ultimately lead to this consummation, society may possibly find that has incurred no great detriment.

At any rate, a beginning should be made in the case of women, who, being by the character of their studies and occupations precluded from co-operating in the making of laws, should for that very reason be treated with peculiar leniency. Yet up to this moment men have never legislated for women in that spirit of kindness which it was evidently the intention of nature they should receive at their hands. From the savage outbreaks of passion it is impossible they should always be protected, but if there shall ever exist a state framed on enlightened principles of justice and humanity, women will be raised to a position which they have never yet occupied.

XLIII.

Men have invariably been found in their laws and ordinances to consult rather their own convenience than the happiness of their companions. It is to ensure the former result, that the education of women has generally been conducted.

Strange to say, there is a tendency in our sex to dread the development of intellect among women, as if, in the clash and conflict of minds, we were likely in the long run to lose ground. To this, the majority are led as well by philosophy as by instinct. Intellect is an exclusive and jealous principle, which, in its higher forms, often delights to surround itself with solitude.

God, according to all creeds, stands alone in the

universe, happy in himself, without second or companion, and many suppose ignorantly, that they imitate him when they segregate themselves from their fellows, and seek for associates in their own thoughts.

But with finite beings the conditions of existence are essentially different from those of supreme wisdom. When strongest, we are but weak, and therefore our law is the law of association, of companionship, of mutual dependence, which, appearing to make one of two, only creates in each an intense consciousness of duality, indissolubly connected with the primary idea of happiness.

It should be the aim, therefore, of society, to develop to the utmost the faculties of women, who, in comparison with us, are not inferior, but different. It appears to me that the two sexes form but parts of one whole, that the intellect of woman is the exact counterpart of the intellect of man, that each is constituted to reflect the other completely, the one to soften the image by reflection, the other to strengthen it.

All studies which have a tendency to make a woman like a man are improper for her. Her aim should always be, to render herself more thoroughly a woman, to comprehend the original design of her nature, and to endeavour by all means to fulfil it.

Nothing is more common than to find men of intelligence shrinking timidly from intellect in the

opposite sex, and taking refuge with gentle ignorance. They do not so much require mental companionship as sympathy, or perhaps, without knowing it, they delight in the feeling of superiority, and wish the women they love to look up to them with admiration.

There are others who feel no jealousy of women, but if they could be invested with the intellect of archangels, would love them all the better for it. What they love, they regard as their own, and can therefore grudge it no degree of grandeur, or intellectual beauty. The higher the woman's thoughts, the nobler her aspirations, the more they delight in being loved by her.

If they could institute a comparison between themselves and her, they would not, if they could, excel her in anything. They feel that where true love is, there can exist no rivalry, any more than between our two hands, or our two eyes; and a man would as soon, therefore, think of rejoicing that his left was brighter than his right, as at the idea that his mind was more capacious than his wife's.

It was possibly some modification of this idea that led the Egyptian legislators to attribute in theory superiority to women, though perhaps, if properly understood, their aim went no further than to give them greater power in domestic concerns, where, when well-educated and well-principled, their authority should always be paramount.

Women, as the experience of all ages shows, are capable of extraordinary disinterestedness and self-sacrifice, but only for those they love. Care, therefore, should be taken that marriage is based on this feeling and on no other, for the wife neither will nor can perform her duty to the man she dislikes. She may struggle, she may put the most violent restraint on herself, she may move invariably within the circle traced out by the laws of marriage, but she will always be less perfect as a wife and mother, than if the bond of union were love.

Consequently, in all wise systems of legislation, there should exist a reasonable facility for divorce, as much, at least, for the woman's sake, as for the man's. Indeed, it would not, perhaps, be unphilosophical to insist, that the law should watch with much more jealous anxiety over the woman's than the man's happiness in domestic life, since, while we have a thousand things to fly to, the woman whose feelings are shipwrecked at home is altogether lost.

For her, therefore, escape from domestic misery should always be made practicable. But while the law favoured divorce, education should be inimical to it. All the tendencies of society should be to give stability to the unions of affection, all the laws of the state should favour the dissolution of unions founded on anything else.

Wherever marriage is indissoluble, society is

compelled to tolerate great corruption of manners; for which reason, all Roman Catholic countries exhibit less respect for the marriage vow, than Protestant countries.* Without perceiving it, they who teach that marriage is indissoluble, only repeat the primitive law that the two sexes were made indiscriminately for each other.

While each commits the greatest irregularities, we may persist in calling them man and wife; but by this, you only predicate that he is a man, and she a woman. To render marriage an union of love, you must enable it to cease with the feeling on which it is based. An union of hatred is disgraceful to civil society, which thus flies in the face of nature by yoking together what God intended should exist apart.

Our formula says that "those whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder." But God is love, and joins only by the links of affection. We are guilty of impiety when we attribute to Him those connexions which originate in base interest, in calculations of convenience, or in any consideration whatever but simple and pure affection.

XLIV.

I trust the reader will not suspect me of any tendency towards the superstitions of ancient Egypt, if I confess I looked with a feeling of peculiar curiosity and interest to the island of

Philæ, in which, according to all the traditions of the Valley, the ashes of Osiris were deposited. While my companions, therefore, remained at Esné to procure a supply of fresh biscuits for the voyage into Nubia, I pushed forward alone, not at all sorry to enjoy a short interval of solitude on this part of the river.

I use the word solitude, however, in an extremely conventional sense, for I had my Arabs with me, and they, in my estimation, were often better company than so many Europeans. I could speak with them, or abstain from speaking, when I pleased. Suliman was a never-failing resource.

He had legends and traditions connected with every place we passed, and if Philæ to him was not rendered sacred by the tomb of Osiris, it was hallowed by having been the scene of one of the charming adventures of Unce-el-Wújud, one of those romantic lovers who now and then appear in Arabian fiction, and doubtless, also, in Arabian life.

While ascending this portion of the river, it happened that the wind was very strong, though favourable, bursting into the Valley through gaps in the Libyan chain, and blowing towards the south with so much violence as to cover the Nile with large waves, and send my kandjia through them with a rapidity which sometimes became alarming.

Delighted with the velocity of our movement, I wished the Reis to keep up both sails. He did not

refuse. He only said he would not be answerable for the safety of the boat, that neither he nor any of his men could swim, and that I must reckon, therefore, on losing them all, if we had the misfortune to capsize.

Such a representation was unanswerable. Even with the great sail only, we appeared to fly like a sea-mew along the river, with a man stationed at the kandjia's side, holding the corner of the sail by a cord passing through an iron ring, ready, in case of danger, to let it go at a moment's notice. This was once or twice thought necessary, and out went this great body of canvass over the bows, flapping furiously in the wind, till the bark righted, when with much shouting and trouble it was drawn back again and adjusted properly to catch the breeze.

In this way we passed by Edfou, the Apollinopolis Magna of the ancients, by Hajjar Silsilis, or the Rock of the Chain, by the vast temple of Koom Ombos, and on the thirteenth of January arrived at Essouan, by far the most singular and picturesque place in Egypt. Owing to a sharp bend of its channel a little to the north, and to the obstruction southward of the island of Elephantine, the Nile here assumes the appearance of a beautiful lake, surrounded by mountains whose forms it reflects from its mirror-like surface.

For the town itself there is very little to be said. It consists of a long straggling group of grey hovels,

thrown carelessly on the slope of a mountain, desolate and barren as death. Behind it, looking southwards, tower the mountains of the cataracts, intersected by the imaginary line of the tropics, and peopled with innumerable wild legends. Your ear drinks in perpetually the roar of the falls, which, at a certain distance, resembles the sounds ascending night and day from the basin of London, and overflowing the surrounding eminences far into the country.

XLV.

The reader will remember what I have all along professed: that I travel to enjoy, and not, like Pythagoras, to imbibe the wisdom of the Egyptians. To me, consequently, agreeable sensations were of more importance than anything else, especially as I never found them stand in the way of any kind of knowledge I wished to acquire.

I might here be said to touch the very fringe of the bed of Isis, of that glorious couch on which she lies in eternal repose beside her lord. It now appeared to me that the inventors of the religion of the Egyptians had real poetry in them, for, as I ascended the Nile, a power seemed to issue from the remotest depths of antiquity, which strongly agitated my soul. I felt exactly as if travelling back into past ages, or more properly, as if sailing up the stream of time towards its source, around which the cradles of men and gods lay scat-

tered promiscuously amid the golden light of the dawn.

I know not what may be the ideas suggested to the minds of others by approaching Philæ, but it seemed to me the Delphi of Egypt, the γαίης ὀμφαλὸς, or navel of the earth, to which the whole human race may be said to be still united by a cord impossible to be severed. This point passed, I felt, in proceeding southwards, that the centre of attraction was behind me, that I was really beyond the land of Egypt, and journeying rather towards the seat of endless barbarism, than towards the birthplace of civilization.

And who knows whether Philæ may not have been to the inhabitants of the Nilotic Valley a sort of sacred Acropolis, in which their ancestors first found shelter and safety, and where they commenced that civilizing process, which, as they multiplied and spread, raised them to a sublime eminence among ancient nations?

XLVI.

As I sat next morning in my boat, describing my impressions of the previous day, a little dancing-girl from Essouan came on board, with two or three young companions, and asked permission to entertain me with their performances. There is really something in race which exerts a powerful influence over our minds.

Towards all this wandering and friendless caste of women I cherished a kindly feeling, chiefly, perhaps, because they were persecuted by others; but this girl immediately excited in me an interest which none of the rest had ever done. I could not at all at first explain the matter to myself, but as I continued to look at her, the conviction flashed upon me that she must be an European. To the Arabs I have always been partial, more than to most of the nations of Christendom, but the sight of an European girl, not more, certainly, than sixteen years of age, among the wild Ghawazi of the tropics, awakened home associations, and irresistibly prejudiced me in her favour.

On inquiring into her history, I found she was the daughter of a French gentleman, who, for some reason which I could never learn, had settled many years ago at Essouan. He had long been gathered to his fathers, and having left behind him no property—friends he could not be expected to have in that remote place—had bequeathed his sweet little daughter to the public.

Her countenance united the dignity of the Arab with the vivacity of the French, her eyes were large and black, her hair was of the same colour, and yet her complexion was that of a Parisian woman entitled to the epithet, fair. She had a small, delicately-formed mouth, and the prettiest smile imaginable.

When I asked her who took care of her, she

replied in a tone of some melancholy, there was no one to take care of her, that she was quite alone, without friends or relations, but that the Arabs were kind. She asked me if I would carry her with me into Nubia, in my boat, and afterwards to Europe, for that she should like to see France, her father's country.

I inquired if she could speak the language, and she replied, "No;" whether she remembered her father's name? she still answered in the negative. Yet, such was her simplicity, she thought it perfectly practicable to find out his relatives, merely by saying he was the person who had come so many years before to Essouan. I excused myself as well as I could for not showing her the hospitality she desired, and assured her, moreover, what was very true, that it would be much better for her to remain where she was, than to travel to Europe, even if she had the power.

A shade passed over her face at this remark, but it was soon gone, and binding the broad girdle about her waist, she astonished me by the energy and grace of her dancing. She afterwards sang two or three songs to a plaintive and almost wailing music; and having, with her companions, been treated with pipes and coffee, and received somewhat more than the usual present, she sprang lightly and gaily ashore, wished me a pleasant voyage, and disappeared among the houses.

I afterwards, however, saw her several times, and

invariably observed that the Arab girls among whom she lived treated her with peculiar deference. If this was owing to the circumstance of her being friendless, it argued in them a peculiar delicacy of sentiment; and if they attributed to her some superiority on account of her European origin, we cannot help admiring their humility.

At all events, she appeared happy, poor girl, in that land of strangers, though it was in some sort her home, the only home she knew or could hope for in this world, and I trust it proved as pleasant to her as I wished it.

XLVII.

When Volney was preparing himself for travelling in the East, he used, it is said, to take long walks in the sun, that he might accustom himself to its heat and glare. This I had done all my life, and, therefore, no change of habit was necessary. But while I lived in Burgundy, in a vineyard, on the slope of the Côte d'Or, I used constantly to practise throwing the jereed, and now, here at Essouan, I congratulated myself on the circumstance.

For, going one day a little to the south of the town, I found a number of natives on a small sandy plain, hurling spears with a sort of boyish eagerness and rivalry. When they had exhibited their strength or dexterity much to their own

satisfaction, one of them came up to me, and holding out a light spear, inquired if I knew how to handle it. I cast off my burnoose, and taking my stand in the proper place, sent the weapon five or six yards beyond the utmost point they had reached, to their no small surprise. Constant motion. and exercise had given me the most robust health, and my diet also was very superior to theirs.

I experienced, therefore, no astonishment, but was considerably amused at witnessing the eagerness they displayed to beat the Frank. Not one of them succeeded, till a man came up who had traversed the Nubian desert several times with the slave caravans. He took up the spear, and sent it with apparent ease three or four yards further, upon which they all wished me to try again, and would scarcely, I think, have been displeased had I triumphed over their countryman. But I felt no inclination to proceed with the contest, and instead purchased the spear, which I still possess.

XLVIII.

There are few pleasures, as it appears to me, equal to that of moving about the world, and beholding daily new men and new cities. The delight should be equal or perhaps superior of chronicling or describing accurately the thoughts and feelings experienced during our peregrinations. But if there

be any man who can really tell what on such occasions he thinks and feels, I am ready to take off my hat to him.

There is nothing I so much covet, as the possession of such a power. What sunshine, what splendour, what strange and wild forms of nature, blue and glowing skies, what genialness of atmosphere should I breathe into my pages, could I recal in all their truth the sensations I experienced in the vicinity of Essouan!

When we passed over into the island of Elephantine, climbed its tallest pinnacles and looked southwards, what a landscape presented itself! On the left, a ridge of mountains, irregular, bleak, barren, and jagged, towered to a great height; on the right, ridges of glowing rocks, with drifts of yellow sand between them, descended to the brink of the water.

Between these chains, the Nile with all its force and volume, interspersed with a thousand islands, black, pyramidal, adorned in parts with verdant and feathery vegetation, came rushing down in vapour and thunder. Here it rolled and eddied in white foam, there it spread into tranquil expanses, beneath the shelter of mighty rocks; in one place it hurried along with innumerable whirlpools, tossing, flashing, covered with fine spray, and precipitating itself with resistless fury through its bed; in another, it broke against sharp promontories, and turning off and fretting, swept like

a sluice between the islands, which shook to their bases as it passed.

It seemed as if we were witnessing the ruins of a whole continent, and that having performed its work, the mighty river would soon be still. But there it has been for many thousands of years, uttering the same sounds, producing the same mimicry of chaos, deafening the traveller with its roar, and making impressions on his memory never by any lapse of time to be effaced.

XLIX.

It is customary at this place to leave the boats, which are dragged up the cataract by ropes, and proceed into Nubia on asses or camels; but we determined to keep to the river; and having agreed with the "captain of the cataract" for an adequate supply of men, began early in the morning to make the ascent.

It was the finest weather in the world, the sun was shining brilliantly, the sky stainless and as blue as sapphire, and a delicious breeze came blowing up the stream from Egypt. Hoisting all sail, therefore, we turned the prow of the kandjiâ towards the rapids, and in a short time found ourselves in the midst of them. Nothing can surpass the scene in grandeur.

As we sailed forwards amidst black pyramids of basalt or granite, a veil of delicate foliage, descending tremulously to the face of the stream, screened

us from the sun, while it was penetrated and rendered semi-transparent by its light. Then we would emerge into his full blaze of glory, which converted the foam of the cataracts into surges and showers of pearls and diamonds.

Now we threaded narrow channels, between rocks and islands of all shapes and sizes, and now got into a smooth open space, where the old dragon seemed to be taking breath before he descended into the Valley. The channels were really countless, and the appearance of the whole of indescribable beauty. Another boat, which had selected a passage further to the west, appeared and disappeared alternately between the islands, as with its white sails bellying to the breeze it gallantly ascended rapid after rapid.

At length we reached the point where ropes became necessary. Cables were fastened to the mast, and seventy or eighty men, stationing themselves on promontories and ledges above, dragged it up the foaming surge, and placed us in comparatively smooth water, where we could safely trust to our sails.

On, therefore, we went before the breath of the north wind, moving between a long succession of islands, sometimes in sunshine, sometimes overshaded by the mountains, till at length Philæ, in all its mythological beauty, shaded with palms and mimosas, and covered with majestic ruins, burst upon our sight.

Thousands have beheld it, thousands more are beholding it daily, but to me it appeared as fresh and new as if the bark of no European had ever ploughed those silver expanses of the Nile.

Here all nature changed countenance. The channel of the river grew narrower, the mountains loftier, while deep and formidable gorges carried your eye inwards in the direction of the eastern desert.

The almost entire absence of moisture, by withdrawing the last veil as it were from over our heads, seemed to disclose the blue abysses of the sky, which almost made you tremble as you gazed into them, just as you would feel if hanging over a precipice commanding a view of infinite space below. The thickness of our atmosphere breaks as it were the rays of thought, and prevents them from rushing up into those formidable altitudes which make the very soul giddy, and turn back towards the earth.

PART THE FIFTH.

I.

We will not this time land at Philæ, but pursuing southward the shining course of the Nile, proceed at once to the gates of Kalabshi, where the channel of the river again contracts, so as to produce at times a slight rapid. Here we went ashore. What the pleasure is which results from ascending heights I cannot exactly explain, but wherever I have been, I have found myself impelled irresistibly to climb the loftiest pinnacle in the neighbourhood, that I might contemplate from thence the whole extent of country lying within the circle of the horizon.

This, at Kalabshi, proved no easy task. The acclivity was so precipitous that the immense rocks which hung loose here and there upon it seemed only to require a touch of the finger to send them bounding into the river below. Several times as I climbed towards them they seemed to be sliding from their foundations, and descending

like overwhelming avalanches upon me; and in truth a very trifling shock would have put them in motion.

Many of their brethren had already preceded them, and down in their turn they must inevitably come, though it was my good fortune, as the French express it, not to assist at the catastrophe. The heat, meanwhile, was terrific, so that I was on the point of dissolving into a fountain, and flowing like a melted philosopher into the Nile.

Perseverance, however, will accomplish most things, and by its assistance I at length sat panting and dripping on the summit, and enjoying the delicious coolness of the breeze, and the magnificent landscape stretching before and around me on all sides.

What a charm there is in those solitary places of the earth! I could not, look which way I would, discover a single indication of human life, or that life had ever been there, for my boat was concealed from me by the rocks below. Silence might be said to have selected the whole of that region for her domain. The craggy chains on both sides of the river, the desert beyond, and the surface of the stream itself, lay slumbering in exquisite stillness beneath the bright and loving firmament which hung fondly over the whole, clasping it in its embrace, and seeming to inspire it with visions which suffused a warm smile over its countenance.

Here was all the beauty and all the majesty of death. The sunshine fell on the distant sandy plains, and a breeze at once refreshing and fragrant came murmuring over the whole scene, whispering and sighing among the rocks, like the breathing of our great mother in her sleep.

I did feel then as if I could have sat there for ever, and watched the rising and setting of the sun by day, and of the stars and moon by night, and the succession of the seasons, and the march of years, till the earth itself should dissolve and melt into space, and, where its opaque body once moved, leave a clear passage for the rays of living light which will stream and glance through the firmament to all eternity.

Presently I observed Suliman gesticulating like a prophet far down on the banks of the river, making signs to me, and I fancy shouting to the top of his voice, to descend to dinner.

All my visions, therefore, of eternity and infinite space, were to terminate in a roasted pigeon. And in truth my philosophy had made me hungry, assisted a little, perhaps, by my exertions in climbing the mountain. With great pleasure, and a tremendous appetite, I accordingly descended, and getting as fast as possible on board, found a most tempting repast laid out in the cabin.

I wonder the savour had not reached my nostrils as I sat with Jove on the summit of the Nubian Olympos. At any rate, it reached me now, and

I sat down nothing loath to the delicacies which Suliman's skill had prepared for me.

All have felt the pleasure of resting after toil, but all have not felt this pleasure in the valley of the Upper Nile, where, in spite of the heat, the purity of the atmosphere sharpens the appetite and makes you relish wonderfully the *dolce far niente* after dinner. This I say, because smoking and drinking may often well be regarded as doing nothing.

Vere, I regret to say, was by this time beginning to get tired of the ethereal life we led in that secluded part of the earth, breathing the delicious atmosphere of the desert, and living on coffee, macaroni, and turtle-doves. He conducted back our conversation, therefore, perpetually to Europe.

Strange to say, he was impatient to be in London; not that he preferred Piccadilly and Hyde Park to the Gates of Kalabshi, but that he would rather be anywhere than where he was. This was one of his idiosyncrasies.

He put me in mind of one of those light, tufted, gossamer-like flowers which one finds blown from God knows where, in the Libyan desert. It is never at rest, never, perhaps, passes twice over the same place, but goes on unweariedly before the breeze, mounting, descending, winding, or moving in a right line, according to the accidents of the sandy surface. What ultimately becomes of it no

one knows. It is probably soon reduced to atoms, and the seeds it has distributed lie buried in the sand, to be quickened into vitality thousands of years hence, when the revolutions of our globe shall conduct the requisite moisture to those arid regions.

II.

Over this part of the valley the authority of the Egyptian government was far from being firmly established. The people laughed at our firmans, which they said had no significance for them, but observed that on our own account they would treat us civilly.

Still their company was not always pleasant, and so we preferred visiting the Temple of Kalabshi at midnight. The inhabitants of the village had of course long retired to rest, but quietly as we moved, we roused the dogs, which must have given the good folks notice there were strangers in the place.

Nothing can be more desolate or dismal than a Nubian hamlet, built with loose grey stones, and roofed with palm-branches, or matting thrown across a few sticks. As it never rains, this sort of frail structure lasts for years.

On arriving in front of the ruins, we observed that an immense raised causeway extended from the gate of the temple to the banks of the river, on which

we supposed the old priests, in the cool of the evening, used to walk with their hands crossed behind them, to enjoy the breeze.

Pleasant, no doubt, was the life they led, with the whole population ready to minister to their wants, and housed in structures fitted by their magnificence to be the habitations of gods. Rows of lofty palm-trees stretched along on both sides of this causeway, and by the waving and twinkling of their leaves marked the movements of the air.

III.

On looking westward, through the great portal, I was startled by observing a bright light, which seemed to rest on the sill of a window, at the further extremity of the temple. Full of the stories and traditions of the Arabian Nights, I fancied this must be the lamp of some magician, who had come forth to mutter his incantations among the ruins of the old pagan temple.

There, at any rate, the lamp was burning and flaming like a vast diamond set on fire. I had never before beheld a light so brilliant. If I stooped or moved a little to the right or left, it disappeared; but as soon as I resumed my position on the causeway, I again saw it, glowing and glittering as before.

And what was this lamp? It was the planet Venus, which, hanging over the Libyan desert,

had, in that clear atmosphere, dilated to a size hardly conceivable to a northern imagination. No wonder the Orientals were from the earliest ages addicted to astronomy.

With us, the pursuit of this science during a great part of the year is enough to chill any one, save a mathematician; but in Nubia, star-gazing is a genial and balmy employment. We can feel no surprise, therefore, that the old mummy-makers sat nightly for years on the roofs of their temples, observing the colours of the planets, the movements of the stars and constellations, and the growth and waning of the moon. Canopus, the most brilliant star in the heavens, if we except the dog-star, is here visible, and the whole system of theology seems to emanate from it as you gaze, and to diffuse itself like a golden halo about the earth.

That portion of the Nilotic Valley on which we bestow the name of Nubia is in character and appearance extremely remarkable. In many parts, what by a bold figure of speech we denominate the cultivated country, seems, when beheld from some neighbouring height, no broader than a riband bordering the majestic Nile, which, closely pressed by Typhon, appears to be journeying through the land of its captivity, shorn of its prolific power, and condemned to look beautiful in vain.

But here and there the valley widens, and plains of rich mould and inexhaustible fertility gladden the traveller's eye. Near these in past

ages cities were built, which, through the revolutions of commerce, civilization and political dominion, were gradually deserted, and now lie, monuments of ruin and desolation, on broad rocky declivities overlooking the Nile. Formerly also, on elevated and picturesque sites stood many Christian churches, alluded to in some of those fragments of Eastern travel preserved by my friend the Reverend Robert Walpole, whose admirable learning and industry have illustrated nearly all the countries on the Mediterranean.

IV.

From the time of our quitting Cairo, I was in the habit, as the reader will have observed, of indulging constantly my peripatetic propensities, so that I may almost be said to have walked over the whole length of Egypt, to have visited every town and village, ruin, cavern and mummy-pit, and to have conversed freely with all ranks of people, from the Turkish governors and grandees down to the humblest peasants, who live on black bread and the waters of the godlike river.

In Nubia, notwithstanding the increased heat and the glare of the rocks and sands, I cultivated precisely the same habit, and landing early in the morning, strolled quietly along, sometimes through the cultivated fields or superb palm-groves, sometimes through the heavy sands or along the crests

of the mountains, where I was fanned by the most delicious breezes that ever blew.

God only knows what occasioned the pleasure I then felt in being alone, seeing I am the least solitary creature upon earth, but it was a pleasure, and day after day I sought it, sometimes before the faintest dawn had reddened the cool orient, sometimes in the depth of night, when the moon, walking with her white feet over the desert, invested sand, rocks and rivers with the pale splendours of a mimic day.

One morning, having risen and landed considerably before dawn, I found some difficulty in following the path, and, therefore, proceeding beyond the narrow strip of cultivation, directed my footsteps southward over the sand, along the hedge of the prickly mimosas, which separated the desert from the valley. How entire was the silence of this stillness!

There existed nothing to fear, yet I was not altogether without a certain vague apprehension that some evil might befal me; but this did not amount to a sense of real danger, otherwise it would have sent me back to the river; but the feeling was just sufficiently strong to enable me, with Gray's school-boy, to "snatch a fearful joy."

The moon on one side of the heavens was going down, while on the other I looked in vain for that pearly grey which comes forth like a modest spirit into the sky, to announce the approach of

Aurora. From time to time I paused and gazed around me, and though years, long years have passed since that morning, I am deeply grateful still for the delight I then enjoyed.

Let me not appear extravagant if I declare that the whole universe seemed to have melted with all its grandeur into my soul. The idea did not present itself to me that I was a part of what I saw, but that I was the whole. The consciousness of all things around me melted as it were into mine, or else I lent my consciousness to the material universe.

I know not how a man may be brought into such a frame of mind, but this I know, that to taste again of similar enjoyment, I would willingly, had I the power, traverse half the earth; and most other persons, I feel assured, would do the same. The charm, however, may have consisted in the combination of circumstances. All around me lay extended the immeasurable desert, clothed with lights and shadows of the strangest kind by the setting moon. Here were patches of white sand converted by the magic of light into snow-drifts, and there arose pinnacles of glittering rocks sheathed apparently in silver, and piercing the amethystine ether, alive with clustering constellations.

At distant intervals I caught a glimpse of the Nile, its mirror-like surface slightly tremulous in the fading moonlight. And then the firmament—

was it not full of God? All the fables, all the religion, indeed all the intellectual life of Ancient Greece, seemed to be painted there in everlasting colours.

Every constellation evolved or evoked a world of thought. There Argo steered its eternal voyage toward Colchis, there the mighty hunter Orion drew his glittering bow, there the virgin Cassiopeia sat on her starry throne, and there the hair of Berenice waved in golden brightness among the gods. Above all these extended lovingly across the heavens the white track made by the milk of Hera's breast, which, as it fell from the summit of Olympos, was converted into countless stars.

V.

Wandering on I found myself at length on the side of a rocky hill, where my progress was impeded by ruined walls and piles of hewn stone. The moon had now totally set, and I found it necessary to await the appearance of dawn. So sitting down on a large block, I turned my face like a fire-worshipper towards the east, watching eagerly the appearance of light.

Unluckily everybody has witnessed the birth of day: otherwise what a glorious revelation it would be, especially as beheld in the tropics, where nature puts on in all her movements a splendour and a

majesty wholly unknown in other parts of the world.

Language is rich, but not rich enough to paint the scene I that morning witnessed. After sitting still and meditating a long while on other things than the things around me, I observed on the edge of the horizon a small elliptical arch of grey light, which expanded rapidly, its brilliance augmenting with its dimensions. Then came the flooding of saffron and gold, and a marvellous series of arches of the richest and brightest colours, pink, crimson, and purple, rising above each other, and throwing out irradiations like the spokes of a mighty wheel, till they reached the very apex of the vault of heaven.

A brilliant flame-coloured portal then seemed to open in the east, and the edge of the sun's golden disk soon appeared upon the threshold. After this the eye was fain to veil itself behind its lids, for the splendour became unendurable to sight.

I now perceived, on turning round, that I was sitting in the streets of a "City of Ruins," and at the moment I felt all the significance of the phrase. Where were the chambers now in which beauty had slumbered; in which thousands had been born; where mothers had watched by the sick-beds of their children; where children had attended piously the last hour of their parents, and where the blessings of many fathers had been uttered?

I arose and walked forward, or rather scrambled

over heaps of stones, for there was nothing that could be called rubbish. A few fragments of pottery, blue and highly glazed, seemed to indicate it had been an Egyptian city, but other signs afterwards convinced me it had been built and peopled by Mohammedans.

I paused once more by the ruins of an oratory, and sat down, and forgot for a while where I was. Had that city been still peopled I should have heard the calls of the Muezzin from the minaret, should have beheld the unfolding of prayer-carpets, and heard the murmur of many lips engaged in blessing God on the return of day; I should have seen the water-carrier leading his camels through the street, should have beheld the daughters of Muslims descend with jars on their heads towards the Nile, should have heard their merry laugh; above all, I should have been greeted by the voices of children, coming forth with their mothers to enjoy the cool air of the morning.

Instead, what did I witness, what did I hear? I saw the ruins of their dwellings, of their places of worship, of the little sacred nooks for prayer: and where were they? Banished from the earth to join the generations of old times, who have passed into the invisible world, where, according to the constant faith of the human race, they still form part of that innumerable procession which moves along the wastes of eternity in search of God, but happy while they seek.

VI.

A cool soft breeze ascended from the Nile, and made a murmur among the ruins, so as almost to mimic the voice of life. My thoughts by this time had wandered far away to the banks of the Leman Lake, where the voices of children, I did not doubt, were then ringing merrily—of my children; and they, too, must pass away with me, and their dwelling become desolate, and some man whose existence is yet wrapt in the mists of the future will come and sit upon their hearths, and speculate what manner of people they were. He, too, will bless God in his turn, and go away to join the greater number.

It pleased me that I was alone, because if tears came into my eyes they were observed by none; and come they did as I sat in that ruined city, and meditated on the decay of all that is loved and beautiful on earth. But I deceived myself: I was not alone. On the shaft of a fallen column, a little to the right of me, sat a figure which at first appeared to be of stone.

Presently I saw the hands move, and the head bend gently forward. I arose and drew near. It was a derwish, who, having travelled far into the interior of Africa, was returning towards Egypt. As I am fond of that order of men, I also sat down

beside him on the pillar, and we began to converse. He doubtless took me for a derwish also, since his feelings, I found, resembled mine, at least in what regards the phenomena of earth, for in other respects he had disciplined himself, and subdued his passions, and weaned his affections from the earth, to fix them on what is imperishable.

He gave me the salutation of peace as I approached, and I found that this with him was no mere form, for peace was in his heart, and love to the whole human race. No vestige of bigotry or fanaticism had survived his wanderings and experience, for though attached to his own creed, he was wise enough to know, that truth pervades the whole universe of thought, and is a lamp sufficiently large and bright to light the footsteps of all men to the throne of God.

Mohammedan in name, he was a philosopher in reality, full to overflowing with generous sympathies, but longing to exert them elsewhere. I expressed my wish that his track had lain southward, but he told me he had a mother in the Delta, and that he trusted her days would not be numbered till he should sit once more beside her hearth, and pronounce his blessing upon her for the cares she had bestowed on him in infancy, and close her eyes, and commit her to the common home of all Muslims.

He should then, he said, cease from wandering, convert his house into an oratory, and there devote

his days to the instruction of children, and his nights to the praise of God.

At length, we shook hands and parted, and with staff in hand he went northward, and my blessing, whatever it might have been worth, went with him. No doubt he gave the same to me, for his charity was at least equal to mine, his experience greater, his affections more chastened, his thoughts more conversant with heaven. Muslim and Christian we experienced no repugnance to each other, but, on the contrary, good-will, and I am persuaded that by this means men of the most opposite faiths may be united.

VII.

This part of the valley is inhabited by two tribes, the Kensy and the Noubah, differing very much in appearance from each other—at least as regards the women. The form of the one is light, graceful and elegant, though perfectly black; that of the other particularly awkward, with sharp heels, like the negro, pointed knees, and above all, long pendant breasts, like a lemon, contrasting in this respect with their neighbours, whose breasts are hemispherical, of moderate size, and as hard as those of Europeans.

Their costume up to thirteen or fourteen years of age consists of a little apron of thongs, about nine or ten inches in length, with small white

shells at the ends, which they tie about their waists; beyond this, they have no garment whatsoever, and yet such is the effect of colour, they never appear undressed. At the same time, they are extremely fond of ornaments, have anklets on their legs, bracelets on their wrists, rings in their ears, and necklaces of many-coloured beads, often gathered together in front, and depending between their breasts to the waist.

Walking one day near a village, we came up with a number of young women and little girls, standing in the shade of a wall, probably talking scandal. They were, at all events, deeply interested in what they said, and accompanied their eloquence with a great deal of graceful gesticulation. Unlike the women of Egypt, they exhibited no signs of timidity, but awaited our approach, and gave us the usual salutation.

Unfortunately, these damsels spoke no Arabic, so we were obliged to call in the aid of our Nubian pilot, who acted as our interpreter. There was one girl about eighteen, whose form for symmetry and lightness might be compared with a Grecian statue. She had small knees, small feet and ankles, and the most delicately shaped arm in the world.

Her little hand, too, seemed that of a person who had never been under the necessity of using it, and her countenance had a pretty innocent expression singularly pleasing. I informed her

through Bakhid, that I desired to purchase her bracelets; and she replied I might take them, if I could get them off, holding out her arm to me, as she said so. There was no difficulty, for her hand, when compressed, was so small, that the bracelet passed over it easily, though it appeared to fit tight upon the wrist.

I should observe, moreover, that her skin was well moistened, and I am sorry to add with castor-oil, which rendered her anything but odoriferous. With its assistance, she kept her hair in the finest order imaginable, her curls and tresses being very numerous and descending in black masses on her shoulders; but they were so saturated, that she seemed to have just taken her head out of an oil-jar.

The dripping from her hair descended on her bosom and shoulders, and trickled gradually to the feet. This was the general custom, but the little girls about twelve or thirteen must have made use of some more delicate substance, for though their forms looked smooth and polished, they emitted none of those effluvia which in my friend of the bracelets were so unpleasant.

When they sat in the sun, as they often did, crouching in front of a wall,—their favourite situation,—I could smell them with a favourable wind at a distance of two or three hundred yards.

Returning one day from the desert, I observed to Vere, as we approached a village:—

"You will find there is a bevy of women behind yonder wall;" and sure enough, when we came up, there they were to the number of twenty or thirty, dripping with oil and mutton-fat, and looking as sleek and shining as if they had just emerged from a bath of melted tallow.

Vere took a fancy to negotiate for the thong apron of one of the youngest of the party, and her mother bade her go behind a wall and take it off. The little girl, who was proud of her finery, burst into tears at this command, but money was not to be resisted, and her mamma was inexorable. She assured her, besides, for her comfort, that the money would buy her ten aprons. At length the child dried her tears, retreated as she was desired, and then modestly handed it to us from over the wall, running away and hiding herself when she had done so. With her apron on, she did not consider herself naked, though it could be hardly said to cover or conceal her at all. Custom, however, had settled her ideas of decorum, so that with it she thought herself unexceptionable, but without it, naked; such is the force of habit.

VIII.

Crossing over to the right bank we witnessed a very strange exhibition. This was a small Turkish encampment, where we saw soldiers of nearly all nations returning from the interior of Africa,

bringing along with them a large company of female slaves. Of these a majority were Negresses, and the remainder Galla or Abyssinian women.

They were kept in a large fold like sheep, with an enclosure of calico stretched on poles, to protect them from the gaze of strangers; but they contrived, poor girls, to exhibit their beauty, in spite of their jealous owners; for, getting on tip-toe and resting their chins on the calico, they showed us, as we passed, their laughing faces.

Some of them on the following night managed to get out, and the excitement they created in Korosko is not to be described. The honest Turks, their masters, fatigued by their long march across the desert, had fallen fast asleep, and so also had the native guardians set over the female slaves.

The opportunity was not to be overlooked, so they resolved to enjoy a few hours of freedom, which they spent as they pleased in the village, drinking, singing and dancing with the Nubians, till they judged it time to return to their prison, where in the morning they were all found looking as innocent as if nothing had happened.

I saw one or two of the Galla girls by candle-light. They were of a dark bronze cast and extremely pretty; but the Abyssinians were too fat and lazy to come out, or perhaps the aperture through which the others forced themselves could not accommodate their more liberal proportions.

Had the Turkish gentlemen detected these

adventurous damsels, they would have punished them possibly with the Kûrbash, but more probably by putting them on short commons. However, no tidings of detection reached the outside of the encampment, so it is pleasant to suppose that the girls escaped; though the oftener they did so, the more daring would they become, till discovery and chastisement, perhaps the sack and the Nile, overtook them in the long run.

IX.

Of slavery nothing too bad can be said. It is the worst of all crimes man commits against nature; but to do the Orientals justice, they manage to deprive this villanous institution of many of its worst features. Still, to be the goods and chattels of another is to be in a pitiable condition, because, though it may be the interest of your owner to treat you kindly, people are not always alive to their own best interests, and often yield to the suggestions of passion and rage, instead of curbing them for the advantage of their pockets. Fearful stories are told in Egypt of the cruelty practised on slaves, and though these are the exceptions, they suffice to show what every person in servitude may be exposed to by chance.

The following anecdote may be related in illustration. It was the custom of the Defterdar Bey, who was always surrounded by the terror of arms,

to ride out with a number of Memluks, each of whom carried a thousand sequins in his girdle, that, should he suddenly be obliged to fly, which, considering the terms on which he stood with the Pasha, was not at all improbable, he might still be provided with money for immediate use.

During the campaign in Syria, a number of these young men made their escape with their charge, and took refuge in that country, where they were quickly discovered and sent back to Cairo. On their arrival they were ordered into a great hall, where they were commanded to attack and destroy each other until one only should remain alive, and to the survivor it was promised that he should be allowed to retain his thousand sequins. The Memluks obeyed, fought desperately, and shed their blood like water. At length, one man only was left, the victor over his unhappy companions; but while he was rejoicing in his superior bravery or good fortune, the Bey gave the nod to the executioner, and the head of the surviving Memluk immediately rolled along the floor.

On another occasion two of his attendants quarrelling, drew their swords in his presence, at which he was so furiously enraged, that he commanded the heads of both to be struck off. The Memluks, determining to sell their lives dearly, presented their pistols and endeavoured to shoot the tyrant; but some of his other followers interposed and enabled him to escape into the harim, where the

slaves, now joined by a number of their companions, pursued and besieged him, and he would then have paid the forfeit of his barbarity, had not a party of soldiers been sent to his assistance from the citadel.

With these he succeeded in repulsing the assailants, who, in their turn, were driven into a turret in the palace, where they were closely besieged. For many days they held out and fought desperately, but despairing at length, either from want of food, or from the thinning of their numbers, they collected all the gunpowder within their reach, and blew themselves up, with the turret in which they had taken refuge.

The servants of the Bey imitated his example. An officer of his household one day sent a slave to buy fish. When the man returned, his master, enraged with him for having purchased an inferior sort, was about to shoot him, when the pistol was snatched out of his hand by his companions. He was not, however, to be disappointed, and taking up a large club, beat the man to death. This was witnessed by the servants of an European, who drew up a memorial of the affair, and sent it to the Pasha, but no notice seems to have been taken of it.

X.

Chateaubriand, who loved to say startling things, whether original or not, observes: "The greatest misfortune that can befal a man, next to being born himself, is to give birth to another." For a Christian, this, methinks, is a strange sentiment. It is like throwing back the gift of life impiously into the face of Him who gave it. Byron falls into much the same strain, where he writes:—

"And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Twere something better not to be."

If our philosophical travellers in the East comprehend Buddhism, the fancy of these wayward geniuses of Europe, depressed and rendered sombre by exhaustion, constitutes the central principle of that religion; all its disciples sigh for or covet being *nibbān*, or annihilation. One can conceive a dreamy talapoin, reclining at his ease in some lofty gilded chamber, and inhaling the calm and balmy air breathing in upon him from the broad surface of the Menam, lapsing into a state of mind so dim, so shadowy, so undisturbed by passion, so unenlightened by speculation, that he may form the wish to remain in this state of delicious absorption for ever; and it is upon such a state, it seems to me, that he bestows the name of *nibbān*.

He does not sigh for non-existence, but for complete inaction, for the eternal prolongation of that *dolce far niente* which relaxed and effeminate

natures regard as happiness. They appear unable to comprehend the far greater delight springing from the exertion of energy, from struggling, from contest, from perilling life in the cause of some great principle.

It is in this that the highest joy of our nature is found, when, whatever pleasures we may have tasted, they become insipid in comparison with that intense feeling of exaltation which one experiences amid the roar of artillery through the streets of a great city, when the scent of gunpowder fills the atmosphere, when the darkness of night is dissipated by rockets and shells, and when through the intermingled gloom and splendour the figure of Liberty appears to move about like a goddess, breathing her holy fervour into every soul.

This is something better than *nibbān*. Let no man, therefore, pity such of his species as have fallen behind barricades, or in storming the palaces of despots, or in the attempt to trample tyrants under their feet. They have yielded up life when they were filled to overflowing with vitality, and when their love for the human race overcame and threw completely into the shade the reluctance to relinquish existence.

Those are the moments one would have prolonged for ever, when self is extinguished in the breast, when charity expands so as to fill every chamber of the soul, and makes us forget completely our individuality in our desire to win

freedom for other men, even those who are to come after us, and who, perhaps, will never so much as know us by fame.

I am furthest, therefore, of all men from agreeing with such as undervalue life. It has indeed been to me a pearl of great price, and my gratitude to the Giver of it will for ever, I trust, be great in proportion. Still I am altogether unable to explain in what happiness consists, and why one moment should be so much more inestimable than another. I cannot, for example, say why, during some of my walks in Nubia, I enjoyed a mental satisfaction so extraordinary, that in all likelihood it will appear perfectly fabulous to the reader.

XI.

One day, especially, on the left bank of the stream, I found myself among a series of mounds and hollows, some circular, others long and winding, clothed and perfumed with wild thyme, and sprinkled with numerous small but brilliant flowers. Here and there were patches of long soft grass, divided naturally into so many small fields, by flowering and odoriferous copses. Here and there were sandy spots, on which, with a philosophical eye to economy, the shepherds of the desert had kindled their fires that they might not destroy a blade of grass.

This strip of country ran along the eastern edge

of elevated sandy downs, and as I walked, I could command on one side a view of the river and the valley, and on the other, of the desert. A delicious breeze was at the time blowing from the north, cooling and bracing my frame, and enabling me to enjoy the sun's heat and light, which descended in dazzling floods around me.

Of course, my feelings were not the growth of the place. The regular life I had led for many months, rising and going to bed early, drinking the waters of the Nile, living on the most wholesome food, and taking abundance of exercise, had brought me into a state of health which I regard as perfect. Never was the human frame more finely balanced, or in greater harmony. Every act of life was pleasurable, above all the inhaling of the pure air, which sent every instant a thrill of delight to my fingers' ends. And then the pleasures of the imagination, of memory, of hope!—I fancy there are few who desire to pass out of such a state into the dreamless regions of forgetfulness. Add to this the magnificence and splendour of the night, the heavens above and the Nile below studded with stars and constellations, the night-winds breathing mysteriously through ruins and palm-groves, the moonlight converting the white sand of the desert into snow, the music of birds hailing the sun at its rising and setting, and the indefinite consciousness of I know not what danger lurking around us in the desert; and

it will not, I think, be difficult to conceive that there must in such a life have been an irresistible fascination.

Supposing it possible for such a state of things to be permanent and to be enjoyed by the pastoral tribes who feed their flocks in those remote and secluded wastes, the advantages of civilization would be no compensation to mankind for the loss of a wandering life. But do we practically find that the shepherd races in any part of the world are much happier than their neighbours?

From some circumstances we might almost be led to conclude in the affirmative, since there appears to be no tribe which has been led by accident to abandon its nomadic pursuits, that does not look back with regret on its restless and roaming days, when, free as the breeze, it passed over the surface of the earth, living everywhere but resting nowhere.

The Bucolic poets, however, of civilized countries, when endeavouring to realize to their imagination a shepherd's life, have been almost invariably betrayed into false theories. They have introduced upon the scene ignoble persons, slaves, sordid rustics, or genteel idlers, babbling about Delias and Chloes, in language the most mawkish and insipid.

Love is not life, though it be that which imparts to life its true flavour, and perfume. But in pastoral poetry we have too frequently nothing but a picture of selfish passions, degrading, not ennobling those who feel them.

Among the shepherds of the East there is often an elevation of sentiment created by the sense of power, which, when detached from selfish gratification, assumes something like a divine character. For the mind naturally invests itself with grandeur, when it feels that it is able to do much good or ill, and prefers the former through benevolence towards mankind.

How great is the joy that springs from diffusing happiness over millions, from shedding sunshine into the hearts of the friendless and the forsaken, from searching out the widow and the orphan, and making them forget, at least for a moment, that they ever knew happier days! He who has experienced this delight may possibly form some dim conception of the infinite beatitude of God, whose bliss appears to be only then complete when he is showering benefits and blessings over the boundless face of his creation.

If our pastoral poets could divest themselves of conventional ideas, and make their pictures conformable to nature, they would be among the most agreeable writers in the world. But too frequently the freshness of their material landscapes presents itself in painful contrast with the corrupt manners of a hybrid civilization. If we would paint life *couleur de rose*, we must carry back our fancy to the golden age when happiness consisted much less in the spontaneous plenty supplied by our great mother than in the absence of all conscious-

ness of crime. Mankind had not then descended to the level of virtue and vice. Their impulses directed them right: the harmony of their ideas was not disturbed by the casuistry of ethics, which, converting customs into laws, deduces from the practice of certain individuals a rule for the guidance of others.

Theocritus, though not uninfluenced by the corruption of his times, is more interesting than Virgil, who again, in his turn, moves more steadily on the confines of nature than the quaint Bucolic writers of later days. Even the author of the Faerie Queen, whose mind had in it much of the antique, failed when he attempted Pastoral, because he sought to infuse into it a spirit irreconcileable with its character.

XII.

At the town of Derr I got accidentally into a little adventure that might have proved extremely unpleasant. Having left my boat and gone forth in search of a barber to shave my head, I contrived, small as the place was, to lose my way, and became entangled among a number of garden walls and narrow passages. Proceeding along one of these I fancied I heard female voices, and presently emerging into a shady court, beheld a young Circassian in the bath attended by a black female slave.

In Christendom the lady would certainly have

shrieked and brought forth all the household in a moment: but her oriental education had taught her greater caution. Casting on me a look of surprise, as she stood upright in the marble basin as white almost as the marble itself, she asked me how I had come thither. I replied that I had lost my way, and knew neither how I came nor how to depart.

Perceiving my perplexity to be unfeigned, she replied:—

"Stranger, you are in much peril, but follow the slave and she will conduct you to a place of safety."

So saying, she waved her hand towards a dark corridor, through which, after bowing to the lady, I followed the negress till we reached a small door opening into the street.

As it would have been extremely awkward to meet any of the gentlemen of the establishment within the walls, since they might have shot me first and then inquired how I came there, I felt considerably more at my ease in the common thoroughfare, and went and sat down on a seat beneath the immense sycamore which stands in the centre of a large open space where the good people of Derr, male and female, assemble in the evening to discuss the gossip and scandal of the neighbourhood.

Here I was soon joined by the kasheff, a jovial elderly Osmanli, into whose house it was that I

had involuntarily intruded myself. He was accompanied by several slaves bearing tobacco bags and pipes, and without inquiring into my creed or country, the hospitable Muslim invited me to smoke.

Had he known I had just been *tête-a-tête*, though accidentally and but for a moment, with his Circassian wife, he would probably have treated me very differently. But his ignorance stood my friend, and we went on smoking and chatting, till Vere, with a party of Arabs from the boat, arrived in search of me. It was not without some reluctance that I quitted my friendly Turk to visit the ruins in the vicinity, which, however, to avoid monotony, I omit to describe.

XIII.

As you contemplate the Egyptian monuments you are struck among other things by this, that although the sacerdotal order exercised supreme influence in the country, they were careful to associate with themselves in popular estimation the conquerors and devastators of the earth. You meet everywhere with the effigies of Sesostris engaged in the sanguinary work of extermination, driving his triumphal car over the dead and dying, or grasping a group of people together by the hair, and lifting up his sword to decapitate them at one stroke.

Well may the world exclaim, in the language of the Scriptures, "And these be thy gods, O Egypt!" but as Lord Castlereagh used to phrase it in the House of Commons, we must not holloa before we are out of the wood. For is it much better in modern times? To whom do we erect statues?—to those who serve, or to those who destroy us?

Apparently, we have not yet discovered in what civilization consists, and cannot appreciate at their true value the services of different classes of men to society. Philosophy, of course, can have nothing to do with men in general, because they have neither the leisure nor the means so far to cultivate their intellect as to place them in that light in which things appear exactly as they are.

The majority I suppose must always see darkly through the glass of passion or prejudice, through symbol and allegory, through types and figures, and in some degree, perhaps, through the mists of ignorance. They will, consequently, never be able to distinguish accurately the *modus in rebus*, though their manner of thinking and judging may be indefinitely ameliorated, so that if not actually philosophic, they may at least approximate to that condition, and rise above the grosser exhalations and ground fogs of popular prejudice.

But whatever in this respect may happen, it is of no use to scold the world, which errs less through crime than helplessness. It would do

better if it could. Dazzled by phenomenal grandeur in its infinite modifications, it has neither time nor aptitude for studying merit and greatness in the abstract. Besides, the real teachers of the world, intent only on doing, and uncovetous of applause, put on none of those theatrical disguises which excite curiosity and rivet attention.

We seldom, therefore, erect statues to philosophers, to poets, to writers of distinguished genius, to sculptors, or to painters. Our civil idolatry runs in a different direction. When, in our clumsy way, we aim at accomplishing the apotheosis of our fellow-creatures, it is some soldier or sailor, some laborious expounder of law, some obscure governor of some obscure colony, some minister of state, some Earl, or Duke, or Prince, that we, in our wisdom, select.

It may be ridiculous to affirm with one learned Theban, that the world knows nothing of its greatest men,—for if the world does not, who does?—but whatever may be the extent of its knowledge in this respect, one can entertain no doubt of its being constantly at fault in its conception and comparison of greatness. What it chiefly worships are the individuals who are great by accident, or those who are glorified by the tons of gold on which they stand up to challenge the admiration of their contemporaries.

They manage these things better in France, where Corneille and Racine, Montesquieu, Voltaire,

and Jean Jaques Rousseau, monopolise a far larger amount of the feeling and admiration of the country than all the kings since Pepin. Turenne, Condé, Vendome, and Catinat, are familiar only to the historical student: but the author of the "Contrat Social" lives in the very heart of the people; his fame constantly expanding with their expanding intelligence. Who, therefore, would not rather have been Jean Jaques Rousseau, than Sesostris or Rameses, or whatever else the learned please to call him?

XIV.

It has been said, however, that there is a system of politics as well as philosophy suited to every period of human life. At the outset, when full of their youthful studies, men are inclined to advocate principles, generous and heroic, and most conducive to individual and national independence. On advancing further into the period of manhood, they suffer vulgar prudence to interfere, first with their declarations of opinion, then with their opinions themselves. Moderation is substituted for enthusiasm, calculation for intrepid greatness of thought.

Perceiving the timidity of mankind, and the unpleasant consequences which they have to encounter who startle them too rudely, the possessors of heroic politics slide gradually into the practice of Jesuitism, and become all things to all men. As

age creeps on and sensibly diminishes their powers, they shrink instinctively from all fierce contests with the world, and becoming still weaker and weaker as they proceed, at length acquire an affected reverence for authority, and prefer the vault-like stillness of despotism, to the sweet, fresh, but somewhat stormy atmosphere of liberty.

Some few men, however, there are, gifted intellectually with eternal youth, who carry on in their souls the freshness and perfume of liberty to the tomb. With these the worship of it is never based on selfishness. They do not make war on power to gratify their own ambition, or desire to rise by depressing others; but aiming honestly at promoting to the utmost the good of their fellow-creatures, they derive that happiness which constitutes their reward, from beholding the prevalence around them of popular contentment and prosperity.

XV.

A little higher up the river we landed on the edge of the cultivated plain, leading southward to the ruined castle and city of Ibrim, perched on the summit of a lofty rock rising perpendicularly from the Nile, and commanding an extensive view up and down the valley and far on both sides acros the desert.

Though the plain of Ibrim be small, it is beyond measure fertile and beautiful. The vegetable mould,

as I ascertained by measurement, was thirty-three feet in depth, so that its richness and fertility may be truly said to be inexhaustible: nor was the industry of the inhabitants inferior to the soil. Every inch had been made the most of; diminutive channels for irrigation traversed the land at suitable intervals; and patches of beans, lentils, corn, rice, gourds, cucumbers, and every kind of vegetable known in the tropics, followed each other in rapid succession.

The palm-trees planted in avenues projected their feathery leaves towards each other above, forming long arcades, through which sufficient sunshine found its way to bring to maturity the lavish display of vegetation at their feet. In many places the gourds had twisted themselves round the trunks of the palms, and climbing to their very summits had suspended their vast globes of green and gold where, at another season of the year, there would have been clusters of dates.

Here and there along the principal avenues were young sycamores, protected from the children, the cattle, and the gazelles, by neat circular enclosures of clay, which gave the trees the appearance of growing in wells. Altogether this was a little tropical paradise, and I scarcely remember a spot in the whole Nilotic valley, not even excepting the gardens of Er-Rashid, which my memory delights more frequently to recal than the plain of Ibrim.

XVI.

On reaching its southern extremity we were impressed strongly by the truth that Nubia is the land of contrasts; for here a barren promontory, apparently calcined by the sun, towered in frowning grandeur many hundred feet above the Nile, which, broad almost as a lake, ran waveless and sparkling at its feet.

To climb this elevation was no easy matter. The sun pouring down its rays upon the sides of the rocks rendered them so hot that they almost scorched one's feet through the boots, and it was impossible to keep the bare hand on them for many seconds. Up, however, we toiled, the shingle and gravel slipping from beneath us at every step. But perseverance overcomes everything, so that at length we found ourselves among the deserted houses, many of them still in a state of perfect repair. On the summit of the rock of Ibrim we were fanned by a delightful breeze, tempering exquisitely the midday heat. As we approached the brow of the rock, Vere, who always watched over me with the most friendly solicitude, would not hear of my looking over, unless while he stood further in and held me by the hand. In this way I approached the edge of the precipice, and gazed downward along the face of the rocks,

descending five hundred feet sheer into the Nile. I experienced, however, no giddiness, and could almost have ventured to snatch this fearful pleasure without the precaution of my friend. There was, however, more safety in the practice we adopted, and having indulged in one look, which the slightest accident would have made my last, I retreated a few yards inland to enjoy the magnificent prospect.

XVII.

Ibrim stands on a prolongation of the Arabian mountains, and is entirely isolated except towards the east; loftier by far than everything around it, you enjoy from its summit an almost boundless panorama. The desert in front stretches away, waving and sinking to the verge of the horizon; while northward and southward the Nile is beheld flowing and winding between green banks, till, in the extreme distance, it looks like a blue riband laid gently upon a golden ground.

But what seems most inexplicable is the sky, the immense dome of which is thrown up to an immeasurable height, spanning the universe with an infinite display of grandeur, inconceivable in the north, where the vault of heaven is depressed and contracted by the fuliginous nature of the atmosphere.

The houses of Ibrim, built and roofed with stone,

are in many, if not in most cases, so perfect, that a new comer would only have to sweep out a little dust, to render them habitable. The chambers are spacious, the windows large, and the air breathing through them as pure as ether. What a delicious life might not one lead in these aërial dwellings, with one happy companion far from the influence of our poisoned civilization, over-canopied and hemmed round by an atmosphere filled with sunshine by day, and at night glowing with innumerable stars!

XVIII.

That night, as we sat conversing in our boat, I descanted in warm terms to Vere on the delight of inhabiting a wild place like Ibrim, in company with the woman of one's choice. Life, I fancied, would pass over us like a delicious dream. We should, in death, exhale our souls into the ether, almost unconscious that we were losing them.

He said he once knew at Oxford a young man whose head was possessed by the same ideas, and who endeavoured to realize them after a fashion of his own. Descended from a distinguished, though not a wealthy family, he depended entirely on his father for making his way in the world; that is, I mean, in the track which that father considered the only proper one. Far be it from me to inculcate disobedience to parents; who frequently, however, become the source of endless unhappiness to

their children, by trampling on their best feelings, and even attempting, in some instances, to crush their principles.

In the present case, the young man, whom Vere called Ashley, had been so accustomed to be kindly treated by his father, that he thought in almost any case, he had only to ask and have. This persuasion was unfortunate. It led him to form a false theory of his own position, and to act as though he were independent, while in reality he was the least so of all human beings.

Hitherto his father had appeared to yield to him, because their wills had never been brought into collision. The moment they were so, all was over. Ashley, during a visit to London, met, at a friend's house, a young lady gifted with extremely rare qualities of mind and person. Above the world in intellect, she was beneath it in fortune, since she had absolutely none, and, like the dove from the ark, could find no resting-place for the sole of her foot. To Ashley she appeared like some creature escaped from a higher sphere, to dazzle and bewilder the material dwellers upon the earth; her thoughts and aspirations were so pure, and her affections so entirely untainted by selfishness. Passions she appeared to have none. Her love was like that of a seraph, throwing light and happiness upon others, but deriving and desiring nothing from them.

XIX.

Without reflecting or calculating, Ashley devoted himself to her, won her esteem, and made her his wife. He then, imagining he had done the holiest and most sacred thing in the world, bore her away in triumph, to present her to his father. But his father's door, when the truth came to be known, was closed against him, and he immediately found himself and his young wife afloat in the mighty capital of England without friends, fortune, or profession. Did he repine? Did he murmur? Did he sink into apathy? Did he accuse her who was the unconscious cause of his misfortune? On the contrary, he conferred with her, and having well considered the matter, they agreed that poverty was a thing very endurable to persons who truly loved each other.

This may appear to be a dangerous doctrine, yet it is not. All affections but the true will wither at the touch of poverty, and dissension will take the place of love, with discord and mutual recrimination, and ultimately, perhaps, hatred; but love is able to subdue the very nature of poverty itself, and kindle in the meanest room an altar fire, by the light of which two souls may discover the way towards happiness.

The name of Ashley's partner was Margaret, and he often used to say that he had found in her

a real pearl, which would make amends to him for the loss of everything else. But they were alone, quite as much so as if they had lived on the rock of Ibrim, for no one seeks the dwelling of the unfortunate; and as they sat in winter by their fireside, in the topmost chamber of a lofty house, they heard the wind rattle through the casements, and often fancied themselves far away in the wilderness, with neither neighbours nor companions.

But did the thought render them sad? He looked at her beauty, which never drooped for an instant, and would not have changed his situation with the wealthiest prince in Christendom. Often and often, so destitute was their condition, it came to a struggle of generosity respecting the very means of supporting life. But here, as in all things else, the Pearl was superior still, for she had a thousand reasons to give, why she could not eat this or that, and why she should press it on him.

Fluctuations there were in their fortunes, but they were trifling, and for a long while never rose to the level of comfort. Ashley, however, was full of energy, and set himself earnestly to subdue circumstances, not so much for his own sake as that he might elevate his wife to the situation in which he desired to see her placed. Great as her beauty was, and much as she was necessarily exposed to observation, no one ever dreamt of offering her an insult, for there was that about Margaret which kept all men effectually at a distance.

Nor was this any studied or systematic conduct. Her thoughts were so entirely absorbed by her husband, that her eyes served no other purpose, than to find her way in the streets. It was only at home that she found a fitting object to gaze at; and on his face she could have gazed for ever, for there, every moment, she discovered indications that all his thoughts and ideas clustered about her.

XX.

It boots not here to enter into the means by which Ashley earned a subsistence. He toiled incessantly, but cheerfully, and looked for no reward but Margaret's smile. Of this, however, he was sure, for she contemplated his exertions with inexpressible delight, as made all for her.

Many women in the same situation would have affected to pity him, and lamented that he had been reduced from affluence to what they would probably denominate a state of drudgery. But what is affluence or situation, compared with a woman's love, and what need a man want more in life, when he is happy?

As Margaret herself never repined, it did not occur to her that it would be possible for him to do so. Had the former friends of either been introduced to them, those persons might possibly have affected to pity them; but had some benign spirit passed over London, and lifted the roof from every

house, it would have discovered no pair more truly blessed than Ashley and Margaret in their garret.

By degrees, energy and perseverance met with their reward. Ashley's circumstances underwent some improvement, which was marked, like a thermometer, by Margaret's dress. The amelioration, however, was not great or sudden. Experience had taught him how to turn his talents to better account than formerly, but his life was still a contest, and from every struggle he appeared to gain fresh strength to combat with difficulties. While things were in this situation, a child was born to them, and if the cup of their happiness seemed full before, it was fuller now,—it literally ran over. Margaret's pride at being a mother was so great, that she almost stopped people in the street to show them her baby, which was, besides, so like the father, that the lesser face seemed the greater, beheld through a diminishing glass. As the *sage-femme* expressed it, they were as like as two peas.

Had she possessed the means of hiring a nurse, no stranger's hands should ever have nursed that baby. It was the mother's task—the mother's alone, and she performed it bravely. Ashley, on his part, now began to imagine he had never loved her before, so powerful were the feelings of delight with which he saw her sit on a low chair to suckle the boy. Her face at these moments became so radiant with loveliness, with intense joy, with

high hopes and delicious memories, that Raffaelle, with all his genius, would have failed to paint it.

Ashley alone, had he possessed Raffaelle's art, might have achieved this, for he understood her soul, and could have transferred it warm to canvass.

When they walked out into the fields, carrying the baby in turns, strangers often paused to look at them, so full of intellect was his countenance, so full of beauty hers, and so exquisitely blended were both in the face of the child. When she laid it on the grass there literally appeared to be a halo around it; and so there was, only it was invisible, and consisted of her love.

XXI.

Many and wild were the plans which this couple formed to rise in the world, not to outshine their neighbours, but to keep eternally together, to shut out mankind from their sanctuary, to remain as they were, all in all to each other. Rise, however, they did, gradually as the virtues of both subdued the world to their use, and children came one after another. But was the resentment of the father subdued?

Did fortune descend upon them like a golden shower? Far from it. By God's blessing they supported themselves in comfort; but never obtained a higher share of happiness than when they

sat at their humble fireside in the long winter nights, tossing the baby from one to another, and filled with unutterable yearnings, such as they alone feel who have set up but one image in their heart, and refuse to make room in it for any other.

"I knew them well," said Vere, "and know them still. They would be happy on the rock of Ibrim because they would be happy anywhere, and the stream of children would flow down into the plain, and people and make a paradise out of this valley, where there is at present nothing but despotic Turks and thievish Nubians."

XXII.

Does it imply unenviable qualities, to experience a joy in solitude? Let me hope not, because among my pleasantest moments have been those in which I was furthest removed from society. There is a small sandy island in this part of the Upper Nile, on which, towards sunset, we landed to dine.

Properly speaking, it should rather, perhaps, be called a sand-bank, since it was perfectly destitute of vegetation, and rose but a few feet above the water, towards which all around it descended in wavy gradations, yellow as gold. On both sides the broad river separated us by a considerable distance from the shore, suggesting the idea of our

being in an inlet of the sea. The day had been sultry, but the breeze now blowing from the north was deliciously cool and refreshing.

Suliman and Abou-Zaid, both cooks of experience, seemed that day to have excelled themselves, and set before us a dinner which Apicius might have envied. Probably, the keenness of our appetites may have contributed something to our high appreciation of the several dishes. Dinner over, we got our pipes lighted and lay down on the sand to smoke.

My recollection of the scene is more agreeable than vivid; and even at the moment I fancy we were both of us rather dreaming than waking. Looking towards the south, we had on our left a range of mountains, in themselves arid and barren, but then painted with the most brilliant colours, purple, green, crimson and gold, by the setting sun.

In front the valley spread, the mountains seemed depressed, and on the right lay the desert, level and interminable, and putting on every moment a duskier aspect. After the sun went down, a panorama of gorgeous colours diffused itself over the western horizon. Clouds there were none, but a fine vapour, previously invisible, supplied their place, and being filled with rosy and orange lights, shot up towards the zenith a blaze of fantastic splendour, varied as the Aurora Borealis.

XXIII.

Shortly after dark Vere retired to the kandjia, while I remained a little longer to enjoy the grandeur of the night. It was probably regret that sights and scenes so lovely should remain perpetually unenjoyed, that first led the Muslim to people the earth and air with different orders of invisible beings, who descend at night on rivers and mountains, and gaze with inexpressible ecstasy on the works of God. And it does seem a pity that spots so wild and sweet should be lighted up in succession by the sun, moon, and stars, while there is no one present to admire their beauty.

I walked round the little island close to the water's edge. The old Nile flowed past me in silence, or if there arose any sound, it was that of a low soft ripple at the boat's prow. There was a light in my cabin window, but with that exception, no token of human habitation anywhere. The mountains jagged and pinnacled, the river's long line of tremulous moonlight, the sands of Libya, and overhead the moon and the bright stars—these were the elements of the picture; but there was something which harmonized the whole, and threw it in with irresistible force upon the mind.

When Plato spoke of the music of the spheres, he mistook the seat of that incomparable harmony.

It certainly exists, and is heard, not, however, in external nature, but within our souls. It is there that those spheres roll which have a voice and utterance, and thence a music passes forth and diffuses itself through the whole universe.

It is a sad reflection, that we possess no means of giving permanence to our noblest feelings, to that sympathy with everything, great or small, in the creation, which fills us at times to overflowing, and paints and colours everything around us with inexpressible beauty and fascination. The brightest lines we draw in language are faint and pale compared with our sensations and ideas when we are in a state of high enjoyment.

For example, I can recal, in part at least, the splendours of the landscape around me on the night I speak of. But its constituent parts seem too fragile and evanescent to be represented by words: at least, I find no expressions sufficiently delicate, graceful, flexible, and fusible, so to speak, to delineate the magical softness with which Nature invested everything around me. Moonlight appears always to communicate a supernatural aspect to the world, but in these silent and secluded regions of the tropics Selene shows herself to be a greater enchantress than anywhere else.

I could at that moment enter fully into the sentiment of the Homeric shepherd who, gazing into the stupendous vault of the firmament, felt his heart dilate with a burst of pious joy: γέγηθε

δέ τε φρένα ποιμήν. After all, I fear that little island in the Nile, which appears so glowing and golden in my memory, will seem to the reader but a dim and shadowy expanse of sand. When I saw it, it rose above the waters round and smooth like the breast of some Titanian goddess, lying in eternal slumbers beneath the flood, the moonlight making it white and shining, and investing it with innumerable distinct associations.

XXIV.

Next day we arrived at Abou-sambal, where the united force of inscriptions and excavations carries back the mind to the days of Psammetichus. Torrents of sand blown into the valley through a gap in the mountains had for ages submerged the entrance to these cavern temples, together with the vast colossal statues which, in an attitude of imperturbable repose, keep watch beside it.

It might, perhaps, have been well had the discovery of these hypogæa been deferred till some more felicitous era of Egyptian history, since barbarism from every part of the world has already begun to deface the monuments it affects to admire.

When I entered the Great Temple I had a biscuit in my hand, and ate as I gazed, which offended the delicacy of Vere's antiquarianism, and he exclaimed :—

"Good Heavens, St. John! can you devour biscuits in this mighty excavation?"

I appeared, I dare say, a sort of anthropophagite to him, though I could not discover the least contradiction between admiring a temple and eating a biscuit in it. Indeed, such was my irreverent feeling that I could have sat down on the stony lap of Isis herself, and eaten a beefsteak. It was not my fault, but the fault of the air of the valley, that I possessed such an appetite. Besides, Osiris himself, in days gone by, no doubt did the same thing.

XXV.

On the walls of this temple, as on those of most others, you find elaborate paintings representing the wars of the Egyptian kings. When these hypogæa were decorated, therefore, the admiration for heroic feats of arms had not died away among the mummy-makers, though it afterwards disappeared, and left them an easy prey to the Persians, Macedonians, Romans, and every martial and ambitious race that coveted the possession of their beautiful valley. They were assailed by the same sophistry, and yielded to the same influences which are now employed in assailing the courage of the various Christian populations.

Let it be our glory, say the philosophers of this school, to cultivate exclusively the arts of peace.

which beautify the face of society and soften the manners of mankind. And who will deny the charms of Peace? who can undervalue her gentle triumphs? who can mistake the happiness of beholding throughout a whole land every man sitting under his vine or under his fig-tree, eating bread and drinking wine, and overflowing with kindly feelings towards his neighbours?

But if history teach emphatically any lesson, it is the danger of being led astray by visions like these. It seems to be incompatible with man's nature to nourish and give development to great thoughts in the lap of ease and luxury. He must encounter occasionally that storm of war, calamity, and blood, which, raised by destiny, blows incessantly about our globe, now beating fiercely upon one spot as it advances, and now upon another.

From some regions it is kept aloof by a circumvallation of political ideas; but as in the physical world there is a tempestuous in-rushing of the colder air, where heat has produced a comparative vacuum, so in the political world the effect of what we denominate civilization is to produce enervation and effeminacy, which dissolve and attenuate the manhood of populations, and produce an artificial vacuum, only to be filled up by the manhood of the neighbouring states.

No one, meanwhile, can doubt that much talent and ingenuity may be displayed in defence of these Utopian illusions, and that in proportion as

they are generally received, the men will be regarded as antiquated who advocate any other theory. Besides, it seems barbarous in an age of morbid civilization to stand up as the advocate of war, which all must acknowledge to be in itself a stupendous evil.

But like every other form of adversity, it may be said to carry healing on its wings. Such is our nature, that we require to be chastened, that calamity is necessary to us, that we are the better for suffering, without which we grow corrupt, selfish, degraded, forget our dependent condition, and attempt to repel the idea of God from the obscured and polluted temple of our minds.

I do not undertake to solve the enigma of the universe, but I feel assured that as perpetual calm and sunshine are apt to accumulate the seeds of disease in the physical atmosphere, so unbroken prosperity and peace generate profligacy and impiety in the social atmosphere, and degrade man from his position at the summit of God's works to a vile and loathsome level, on which, with inconceivable turpitude, he forgets or denies his Maker.

XXVI.

A little higher up the river we enjoyed a night ramble in the desert, in search of a temple obscurely indicated by a former traveller. On arriving near midnight at Faras, where alone it is said, north of Abyssinia, the hippopotamus is found, we wandered

about for some time before we could induce any one to rise and serve us as guide. If the good folks are poor in that part of the valley, they are at the same time contented with their poverty. They sleep, moreover, like wild cats, so that in many cases all our rude thundering at their doors failed to waken them.

The village as we strolled through it presented a singular appearance. It consisted of a number of narrow lanes, intersecting each other; and the houses, if I may so call them, presented in front low walls of loose stones, of a dingy grey. The roof was formed by a few palm branches covered with dhourra stalks or light matting. The doors, however, seemed strong, and were fastened on the inside, differing in this from the Arab dwellings in Egypt, into which you may enter without obstruction at any hour of the night.

After a protracted search we found a hovel in which a number of young men were sitting up together, for what purpose we could not conjecture. At first we imagined they might be robbers; but that idea was abandoned when we remembered there was no one to rob, all the neighbours being in much the same condition as themselves, while the visits of strangers were so rare as not in the least to be reckoned upon. Probably up to that period a traveller had not passed through their village above once in a generation.

Upon our knocking and explaining what we

wanted, three young men came out cheerfully, and at once, without making the slightest stipulation for payment, consented to be our guides. They had not the suavity, gentleness, or kindness of the Arabs, but in their manner were rather swaggering and insolent, though it was evident they endeavoured to behave respectfully towards us.

Placing themselves in our van, they immediately turned away from the Nile, and pursued a westerly course leading directly into the desert. When we had advanced some few miles, Suliman, who entertained the strongest prejudice against the Nubians, inquired whether I and Vere had our pistols about us, as he began to apprehend foul play; and upon being answered in the negative, his dismay was great.

He had observed, he said, our guides every now and then feeling for the handles of their daggers, which the Nubians carry about with them concealed under the left arm. But if they meditated any mischief they were exceedingly merry at the idea, for they talked and laughed incessantly, which could not allow me to share the suspicion of my friend Suliman. By degrees, however, I also became uneasy from another cause, imagining, when we had advanced hour after hour without arriving at any ruins, that the guides had lost their way and would lead us all night about the desert, where it is said the lion occasionally makes his appearance, with other beasts of prey, extremely formidable to men without arms.

The surface of the waste was extremely diversified. In some places we passed through rocky gorges, between mountains of considerable elevation; then we ascended a range of hills, or traversed a sandy level; while far and near the moonlight fell in unbroken splendour around, encircling the pinnacles of the rocks with a luminous halo.

"Heaven's spangled glory streaming wide,
Bathes air, earth, stream in one embrace."*

XXVII.

After walking some hours we came to a narrow ravine, with crags impending on either hand. The Nubians halted here, observing that we had reached the place we were in search of. On looking round and perceiving nothing but rocks and sand, I began to imagine they were treating us with mockery, and therefore desired them, in a somewhat angry manner, to explain what they meant. One of the young men then led me a little to the south, and pointed out to me an Egyptian cornice on the face of the rock, observing that the door leading into the excavations was covered with sand.

This with our hands we scooped away, the Nubians cordially assisting, and in a short time had cleared an opening large enough for a man

* *The Last of the Abencerrages*, by Thomas Roscoe: the learned and accomplished son of the historian of the Medici.

to creep through on his belly. With our flint and steel we soon kindled a wax taper, and taking this in my hand I passed under the rock, and at once emerged into a tomb, where I observed one of the most extraordinary appearances ever witnessed.

The accumulation of sand within was so great that my head reached within a few inches of the roof, which appeared to be one living mass of black wings, mouths and eyes, waving, gaping and sparkling in the light of my taper. For some moments I was literally overwhelmed with astonishment. The creatures inhabiting that dismal place, clinging together in myriads like a swarm of bees, hung from the roof in the most hideous attitudes, seeming every instant ready to let go their hold, and cluster round me in loathsome familiarity.

Their eyes were like black beads, strangely reflecting the light. They were bats, not those of the huge vampire species of which I had beheld specimens in the tombs and caverns of Siout, but small as those met with in England. Somewhat excited and disgusted with the near neighbourhood of these little beasts, I hurried forward, and in my haste narrowly escaped tumbling into the shaft of an immense mummy pit, at least sixty or seventy feet in depth.

Upon this I halted, and had the prudence to wait for the entrance of my companions, who had

to scoop away considerably more sand before they judged it pleasant to follow me. We then advanced together until we arrived at the edge of a transverse passage, about fifteen or sixteen feet below the level of the chamber leading inwards from the entrance. Into this I leapt, and advancing rapidly, from my eagerness to explore the interior parts of the tomb, I had reached a long corridor from which several others branched away, and was pausing to consider into which of them I should turn, when a bat came bang against my taper—extinguished it—and left me in worse than Egyptian darkness.

All around there might, for aught I knew, be deep mummy-pits, shafts, galleries, corridors, passages, leading—Heaven knows whither. No ray of the sun's light had ever penetrated thither since the creation. I did not know the way back, any more than the way forward, and having got very much in advance of my companions, I doubted whether I could make my voice reach them. There was something sublime in the situation. I had penetrated into the bowels of a mountain in the Libayn desert, and was surrounded by darkness and danger, the nature of which I could scarcely figure to myself. I stood still, therefore, and shouted aloud, at the top of my voice, to Suliman, to bring me a light. Meanwhile, the bats having been disturbed, flew in clouds through the passages, sometimes striking against my face, sometimes against my head, and sometimes settling for a

moment with their cold clammy wings on my bare neck, or falling to the ground, where I trod upon them. Presently, Suliman hearing my voice, contrived to descend into the passage where I was, and came towards me, followed by Vere, who felt considerable alarm for my safety.

XXVIII.

Everywhere, as well in life as in the physical world, there are passages which, as far as we can discover, lead to nothing. We enter upon many courses of action, and imagine the most brilliant results to lie at the extremities, but on advancing, find them to end in blank disappointment. It was much the same with our Desert tomb. All around us, the galleries and corridors stretched indefinitely away, but in the cases in which we pursued them to their termination, they proved to be mere purposeless avenues, which did not gratify, but baulk our curiosity.

In one of the sepulchral chambers we observed a small opening, about four feet from the ground, through which, it was imagined, I might force my way. Accordingly, Vere, Suliman, and Abou-Zaid, lifting me into a horizontal position, thrust in my head, but there it stuck, and through their awkwardness I narrowly escaped strangling. Here, for some time, I remained, with my head in one tomb and my body in another, but by a little

manœuvring I was released from this ludicrous position.

Sheer fatigue at length compelled us to quit these excavations, without finding anything to reward our toil; and after another splendid walk through the desert, which appeared every moment to put on fresh beauties, we reached our boat, where, late as it was, we supped, or rather breakfasted, before attempting to sleep.

XXIX.

In former times, to reach Wady Halfa was, in some sort, to be a traveller. But *nous avons changé tout cela.* It is a mere trifle now-a-days, and, for my own part, I felt it to be so. To have advanced thus far, I regarded as nothing, since circumstances would not permit me to penetrate further southward into regions untrodden by civilized man.

I was in the heyday of health and strength. Exercise and temperance had rendered me equal to almost any amount of fatigue; and the Arabs who accompanied me would very cheerfully have proceeded to any distance I might have wished to go. With them, moreover, it would have been comparatively safe, at least, as far as the doctrines of El-Islam prevailed. Generally, we should have been received and treated as Derwishes; there would have been rejoicings in the village on our arrival; the salutation of peace would have greeted us, and

the sword of every believer in the Koran would have been drawn in our defence.

Now it was that I experienced in its full force the unsophisticated attachment of the Arabs. If I had left a wife and children behind me, so, in most cases, had they. Yet, without bargaining or making a merit of their devotion, they came and professed their readiness to go as far as I pleased. "If it be God's will," they said, "we shall return —if not, whatever happens is written, and there is no God but God!"

After all this, some surprise may be felt that, putting faith as I did in these children of Ishmael, and experiencing the most unabated eagerness to go on, I nevertheless stopped short, and retreated down the valley. But there is an unspiritual god which often interferes most provokingly with human affairs; and to his unromantic sceptre I found it necessary to bow my head in reluctant obedience. The gold I had brought with me was found, upon careful calculation, to be barely enough to take me back to Cairo, at that time the utmost limit of that civilization in which letters of credit, and bills of exchange, could be said to circulate.

Here, as I was sitting, pipe in hand, cross-legged, on a small divan, revolving in my mind impossible plans for raising the wind in that secluded part of the world, and advancing a thousand miles or so further southward, Suliman burst suddenly into

the apartment, and informed me there was the devil to pay in the village. He looked as much alarmed as if we had been on the point, as, for aught he knew, we might be, of being arrested for murder. It appeared, when I came leisurely to investigate the matter, that a Georgian lady, proceeding with a powerful escort to join her liege lord at Sennaar, had contrived during the night to effect her escape from the caravan. The most careful reconnaissance had been made by the officer of the escort, and the track of a single dromedary had been found leading from the encampment across the desert, in the direction of Wady Halfa.

A body of Turkish horsemen, with the Bedouins as guides, had pursued the supposed traces of the fugitive to the near vicinity of the village, where the footsteps of numerous camels, some proceeding north, and others south, had thrown them completely off the scent. They were, accordingly, come to consult the village sheikh, who, stroking his beard, and putting on a look of extraordinary perplexity, professed his entire ignorance of the whole affair.

Upon further inquiry, it appeared that the young Georgian lady had never seen her destined master, but was proceeding in some sense on speculation, having been consigned by her friends to his family at Constantinople. As he was a Pasha, however, it was thought to be so good a catch, that great surprise was expressed at her sudden disap-

pearance. Some supposed she must have been alarmed at the aspect of the desert into which she had already advanced from Korosko two days' journey. Others imagined she might have experienced beforehand disgust at the secluded life she would be condemned to lead at an obscure town in the heart of Africa. But a new light seemed to break on the affair when it was discovered that a young Bedouin sheikh who had joined the escort at Essouan was likewise missing.

No one exactly knew to what tribe he belonged, but he was of gentle bearing, and rode a steed of marvellous beauty, caparisoned with scarlet and gold, and lighter and fleeter than a gazelle. It was the track of this horse, therefore, that should have been found, but it was not; neither could any intelligence of the fugitives be procured at Wady Halfa.

XXX.

Accordingly, the Turkish soldiers having made in vain every possible inquiry, returned across the desert towards the encampment of their countrymen, and I suppose went on with the evil tidings to Sennaar.

I now remembered that far down the river, at a village where I first saw a plantation of the tobacco plant, a young Bedouin sheikh, answering exactly the description of the Turkish soldiers, had earn-

estly entreated me to take him, horse and all, into my boat, under the persuasion, as it seemed, that I was to make a discovery of vast hidden treasure, with his share of which he might be enabled to carry out some great design. For horses, unfortunately, my kandjïa afforded no accommodation, so I was obliged to forego the pleasure I might have derived from the society of so dashing an adventurer.

Late that night I had turned back to that part of my journal in which the description of the young Bedouin sheikh had been entered, and was examining it by the light of a dingy antique lamp, when I was startled by a sharp single knock at the door.

Vere and our Arab attendants were asleep; I acted, therefore, as my own porter, when two muffled figures entered the room. One of them, throwing back the head of the burnoose, disclosed to me the features of the very Arab whose description I had just been reading.

"Oh, stranger," said he, "I, one of the children of the faithful, am come to throw myself on your mercy, though——"

And he paused, as if about to utter an ungracious word. I finished the sentence for him,—"though an infidel," said I.

"Those were the very words I would have said," answered he, "not employing them, however, in an insulting sense, but simply stating a fact."

"Be it so," I replied; "but, infidel or not, if it be in my power to serve you, I am ready. The people of your creed have on so many occasions treated me as a friend, that I am bound by a sense of duty to repay their kindness as often as I can. Say on, therefore, and I will listen."

"Behold," exclaimed he, drawing back the hood from the face of his companion, "I am no longer alone, as when I sought to accompany you in search of treasure; I have now found what is more to me than all the treasures of the world, notwithstanding I lack the means of hiring camels to transport me to the territories of my tribe, where alone with this companion I can consider myself in safety."

He then related rapidly what I had heard in the morning, while my eyes were involuntarily fixed on the countenance of the lady. She was, indeed, possessed of rare beauty, set off besides by a look of inexpressible modesty, which although not uncommon among Orientals, was in her case very remarkable.

Descriptions of women generally fail to convey a correct idea, but there was something so striking in this face, that I shall at least attempt to paint it in words. The forehead, lofty and white, reposed as it were on two elliptical black arches, beneath which a pair of the largest dark eyes I ever saw rolled and flashed perpetually. The nose was straight, and of the most delicate proportions, and the chin round and dimpled like that of a Greek

statue. But the witchery of the whole face was in the mouth, which, ruddy as that of Hebe, and exquisitely formed, seemed to wear an expression in which the greatest dignity and gentleness were combined.

Addressing me in tolerable Arabic, she said—

"I conjure you by the soul of her you love to have pity on us, and to supply from your treasures the means of passing the desert. You will never see us again, nor will you be repaid in this world, but the gratitude of two of the children of the faithful shall accompany you everywhere; and it will never be forgotten by us, that it was to one of the people of Nazareth that we owed our happiness."

XXXI.

What an odious thing is money, or, rather, what an odious thing it is that one must sometimes count it. Here was an occasion for a grandee to display his munificence. But I was not a grandee, and having relinquished that very morning the design of proceeding further southward into the unknown regions where the White Nile coyly conceals its head, simply through a deficiency of piastres, was I now to strain a point to enable these uncalculating fugitives to escape the vengeance of the Pasha.

On making inquiry, and finding the demands of my friends extremely moderate, I consented, after

a very humble fashion, to imitate Hatim Tai, and in less than an hour these inconsiderate lovers were bounding away beneath the star-light towards their home in the wilderness, leading along with them the gaily caparisoned charger, which the young sheikh had earnestly pressed me to accept.

Let me hope that the felicity of their after days was as complete as the dawn of their love seemed to promise. At their departure they gave me their blessing, and the blessing of two hearts running over with affection is not to be despised. But it may be said, she was the property of another; I doubt the legitimacy of the tie which was supposed to bind her to a man she had never seen, and, perhaps, with half-a-hundred wives or women besides.

The young Bedouin sheikh she had known and loved, and though their acquaintance was short, it was better surely than no acquaintance at all. At any rate I was not bound to answer for the morality of their proceedings, which was exclusively their own look-out. I knew that if taken they would have to expiate their offence by a cruel death, and it was therefore some satisfaction to think that I could be in any degree instrumental in furthering their escape.

And escape they did, for one of the Arabs who accompanied them across the desert, returned while we were examining the temple of Abou Sambal, and by desire of the young Bedouin sheikh, dropped down the river to let me know.

XXXII.

I return to the second cataract. Crossing over to the western bank, we proceeded southward along the edge of the stream, sometimes toiling through heavy sands, sometimes walking over rocky ledges, winnowed clean as a new threshing-floor by the wind. It is almost unnecessary to observe that the morning was beautiful, for in that region of eternal sunshine it is never otherwise. Words, however, as I have often remarked, will not enable me to revive and represent distinctly to the imagination of others, the glowing splendour of the landscape, totally independent of vegetation: for the diminutive palm groves about Wady Halfa, when we ascended the rock Abousir and looked around us, showed but like a green speck on the vast circle of the horizon.

Again and again have I sought to stereotype in language what I then saw. But in these cases the pen, so powerful on other occasions, deserts one entirely. I can discover no phraseology sufficiently broad and massive to delineate the vastness of the picture, composed of four elements, a river, an illimitable expanse of yellow sand, a sky of stainless and intense blue, and a sun shining with intolerable brightness overhead. But what a river!

Looking southward we beheld the Nile flowing in force and majesty from the unknown regions of

Africa, between innumerable islands of red and green porphyry, here breaking into masses of foam, there rolling and whirling in vast eddies, and elsewhere smooth as a mirror, and reflecting in all its brilliance the azure of the firmament.

XXXIII.

The specular mount on which we stood, steep and lofty, literally overhung the stream, and seemed to have been erected there by nature that man might command an unrivalled prospect of its beauty. Let it not be supposed that the Nile here has decreased in breadth or grandeur. It enlarges and augments in magnificence as you ascend, for as it receives no tributaries for two thousand miles before reaching the sea, at every step northward its volume is diminished by evaporation and the exigencies of the millions who depend on it for life.

Here, at Wady Halfa, it presents, from various points of view, the appearance of a mighty lake studded with endless isles, infinite in their form and elevation. Here it vindicates its claim to be denominated the Blue Nile, for the azure of its surface, where it is unruffled, equals that of the overhanging firmament.

Much beyond where it becomes visible, towards the south, I could, by the help of powerful glasses, discern the dim outline of a pyramidal mountain,

beheld likewise by Vere and my other companions, which has never, so far as I am aware, been alluded to by any other traveller. It wore the appearance of one of the pinnacles of the Alps, seen at dawn across the great plain of Burgundy, from the Côte d'Or.

How I longed to climb that mountain, and what would I not have given to enjoy that pleasure! But my wishes and regrets were vain; I was compelled to return, and the conviction having been once arrived at, I contented myself with wandering about the vicinity of the cataract, the grandeur of which, having given the slip to my companions, I enjoyed for hours alone.

More than once I saw troops of gazelles descend to the river to drink, for sitting motionless in the shade of a rock, they seemed not to observe me, and tripped lightly and fearfully one after another, their graceful forms glancing like arrows through the light. Here and there a few tamarisk bushes, fed by the moisture diffused from the river, sprang from crevices in the rocks, or from the smooth sand-drifts, which descended in golden splendour to the water's edge.

XXXIV.

Of course, the fascination of such a landscape must lie chiefly in the fancy of him who beholds it; but I said to myself many times that day, that

if I could have clustered my family around me, it would have been an inexpressible happiness to me to set up my household gods there, join the children of the desert, and bid an eternal adieu to Europe and civilization.

These, it may be, were mere dreams of the imagination, but the impracticability of realizing them has tinged every subsequent feeling with regret. A tent filled with children, presided over by their mother, a flock of sheep, a few camels, a rifle, a dagger and a spear, would have satisfied my ambition. I could have wandered interminably along the river, could have visited the shores of the Red Sea, could have penetrated to unknown depths in the wilderness, or, if I had wished, could have travelled northward to Philæ, or even to the Fayum, and visited the cities of Egypt and the assemblies of the Arabs.

I omit to describe my descent of the stream, and only resume the thread of my narrative on the night on which we approached Philæ. The moon shone brilliantly. On the right was a ridge of lofty mountains, and on the left the river spread out here and there into long winding bays and creeks, which, as the kandjia glided past, appeared to stretch indefinitely into the Libyan waste, to join some glittering sea or lake, sailed over by the Effritt and the Jinn.

What a mysterious air of softness seemed to hang like a spell over the whole landscape! The

surface of the Nile looked like a quivering network of silver arrows, reflecting, as they glanced and trembled, the brightness of the moon.

ἐν δ' ἕσπερον
ἔφλεξεν εὐώπιδος
σελάνας ἐρατὸν φάος.

Along the margin of the waters arose a succession of pyramidal rocks, black below as ebony, but invested towards their summit with the magic illusions of light. Here and there trees of graceful forms shot up between the crags, or hung with feathery beauty over the river. It was a scene of fairy land, the most varied, the softest, the least terrestrial I ever beheld. We seemed to have passed within the confines of paradise, and to be moving through the gardens of the blest.

From contemplating this landscape we were suddenly roused by a wild cry issuing from a narrow ravine in the eastern mountains. At first it was impossible to decide whether the sound we heard betokened rapture or agony. Presently, however, it was repeated, and our Arabs and Nubians recognised the well-known *zagharît*, or shrill shriek of joy, uttered by the women of the valley when in the enjoyment of unusual delight. Whoever has heard a railway whistle at midnight in some remote valley may form some conception of this sound. There is nothing else like it in nature. It is produced by rolling the tongue up into a sort of pipe, and then forcing the voice

through it in a manner altogether inexplicable to me. When ten or twelve women, however, join in the zagharit, it seems to pierce the brain, and persons unaccustomed to it immediately put their fingers in their ears.

We now determined to explore the eastern mountains in search of these revellers; who indeed rendered their whereabouts tolerably clear by the fearful noise they made. As we approached nearer we heard shouts of laughter and clapping of hands, but in order not to put the whole assembly, whatever it might consist of, to flight, we determined to proceed with caution.

Having landed, therefore, in complete silence, we crept forward noiselessly through the brakes and thickets until within about fifty yards of the rocky platform on which, as we now discovered, the revels were carried on.

XXXV.

Our Nubian pilot, a native of that part of the valley, now volunteered to go a-head to conciliate the ladies, and induce them to await our approach. This, at the request of their countryman, they readily consented to do; upon learning which we climbed up to the platform, where we found the whole female population of a hamlet formed into a ring around two young women, who, as we learnt, were dancing the nuptial dance before the solem-

nization of a marriage, which was to take place next day.

One of these dancers was the bride, the other her maid, and they went, it must be owned, through their part with much energy and agility, and no little elegance. At Maharaka, higher up the river, we found the dancers naked, but here they were clothed in the most becoming manner. Room was immediately made for us, and we took our place in the circle of lookers on, who, however, were not idle, but clapped their hands instead of music, in a sort of rhythmical manner, which I thought far from disagreeable. The spectators likewise kept time by motion with the dancers, bending the knees, bowing and rising as they moved. Their performances were sometimes wild in the extreme, exhibiting the strangest attitudes and gestures, which every moment elicited shouts of laughter.

When I looked around me I was much struck by the strangeness and grotesqueness of the scene. On a smooth ledge of rock projecting from the slope of the Arabian mountain several hundred feet above the river, surrounded by palm-trees intermingled with stunted mimosas, and lighted up brilliantly by the moon, was a circle composed of Nubians, Egyptians, and Englishmen, all enjoying themselves in their own way. The zagharit was repeated, the laughter and clapping of hands went on almost perpetually, our presence

not operating as the slightest interruption to the merriment.

The fact that we were strangers seemed to have been forgotten by all present, by ourselves especially, for it was not until near midnight that we thought of taking leave. Then presenting the bride with a little bag of piastres to augment her marriage portion, we shook hands with our hosts, and descended with some difficulty the precipitous sides of the cliff till we reached the river's bank.

We then embarked and recommenced the descent of the stream. Strangers and foreigners as we were, our departure had evidently thrown a damp over the company, though they did not desist from their amusement. But their shouts and clapping were fainter, their laughter less loud. For some time, however, we continued to hear the tokens of their merriment, which were by degrees buried in silence, and nothing remained but the sound of our own voices conversing almost in whispers, the dip of the oars, and the gentle ripple breaking round the prow of the kandjia as it outran the rapidity of the current.

XXXVI.

It was quite midnight when we approached Philæ, which, covered with ruins and rich tropical vegetation, and invested with the glory of ancient days, rose like a mythical vision out of the Nile.

Mooring in a little woody inlet immediately under Pharaoh's bed, we landed to enjoy the beauty of the island and its temples by moonlight. The place, by some process inexplicable to me, had been rendered holy, for one cannot refuse so to consider a spot hallowed by a nation's sympathies and a nation's piety.

Sacred structures fresh and complete in their proportions seem to acquire an additional grandeur by night, when the imagination spreads its wings over them and broods on their pinnacles like a god. But in some sense ruined temples are more impressive still. The outward tokens of the divinity have indeed departed, the chantings of priests and the songs of vestals, altars fuming with incense, blazing lamps, and the sounds of music, are wanting; but the object of worship seems only to have concealed itself in some inner shrine invisible to the vulgar eye, but not, therefore, less present to the mind.

Here, in some sort, I was to take my farewell of Isis, not as an universal spirit breathing through all nature, but as a personified influence circumscribed by time and place. The sculptures, the paintings, the hieroglyphics, speaking, though imperfectly, to the mind from every wall and column, seemed all to point more or less directly to her. Here the mystery of her grief was consummated. Here she beheld the object of her love descend into the tomb—a god slain by a god, immortal in his

essence, yet submitting to temporary extinction, or rather eclipse, for the power he had possessed in life, according to popular belief, still clung to him in death.

What the Egyptians meant to signify by the death of Osiris, no one perhaps has yet fully discovered. We may take refuge in affected contempt or incredulity; we may say the enigma is not worth solving, or that learning has already penetrated into its adyta and thoroughly illuminated them with her daring torch: but when we interrogate our secret consciousness we find it is not so. After all that has been written in ancient and modern times, a sphinx-like mystery still sits on the brow of Philæ in imperturbable serenity; unsolved, and perhaps unsolvable.

To be a god, according to the conception of the whole human race, is to be exempt from decay and dissolution, to possess power unlimited, and to exert it throughout all time, and towards all for good. But Osiris, the greatest of the Egyptian deities, or at least the equal of the greatest, assailed by the power of evil, underwent defeat and passed into the realms of death. In this statement, if in any, there appears to be a contradiction. But before we decide that the case is so, it may be useful to examine once more the ideas entertained by the Egyptians of the Divine nature.

God, according to them, contains within himself the active and the passive principle, that is to say,

Osiris and Isis, and from their union proceed all the phenomena of creation. But this creation moves in cycles, and time dissolves gradually or at once all finite forms of being. When the vital principle, therefore, passes out of any created things, Osiris is supposed to die. But as the energies of nature do not perish, Isis is said to go about in search of her lord; while she is engaged in collecting and concentrating within herself the scattered sparks of life which, when united in the proper place, produce a second creation.

Another interpretation of the legend may be sought for in the accidents of the Nile. On entering Egypt its prolific waters are diffused through the veins and subterraneous channels of the earth, and thus dispersed and scattered, pumped up by the sun, and converted into vegetable juices, are apparently lost. Isis, therefore, palpably a personification of nature contemplated as operating in the Nilotic valley, draws together and confines in the receptacles of the clouds all the subtile portions of her lord, and proceeding southward in funeral pomp through the sky, unites them once more with the original stream above Philæ, and thus perpetually restores to him the fertilising power.

But all these versions of the ancient legend are unsatisfactory. The Egyptians when they talked of Osiris's death, evidently regarded him as a god in human form, whose remains after his dissolution were interred in the sacred isle, where his goddess-

wife, like Aphrodite on the death of Adonis, poured forth her soul in immortal longings to be united with him in Hades.

In the thickness of the wall of the great temple, which we explored by torch-light, we discovered what it is probable were the approaches to his tomb. These, so far as I am aware, had never been noticed by any former traveller. At the extremity of a sepulchral chamber, entirely unadorned, into which I had by chance descended, I observed a small square aperture in the roof. Climbing up to this over the shoulders of the Arabs, who converted themselves into a sort of ladder for the purpose, I found a similar chamber and aperture above, and in the same manner made my way, followed by Vere, to story after story, but there was no vestige of a sarcophagus, nor any indication that one had ever been there.

I examined every stone in the wall, in the hope of finding an entrance into some secret chamber which might have been supposed to be the tomb of Osiris, but all I found were two or three niches on the eastern wall, which probably held lamps during the progress of those mystical ceremonies which, it cannot be doubted, were once performed here. The priests doubtless had little ladders, which, as they ascended from room to room, they drew after them, till, having reached the highest, they were completely out of sight and hearing of the external world.

Nowhere in the valley does Isis appear so beautiful as in the sculptures of Philæ. There, whatever way you turn, you behold her serene, placid countenance, sometimes smiling on you, sometimes fixed in grief on the remains of Osiris, found piecemeal, and reconstructed, as it were, by her. To the believer in the old indigenous creed this island was not so much a portion of the earth as the vestibule of Amenti. Through its sacred limits Osiris himself had passed to his realm of shadows.

When at length my companions returned to the boat, I ascended the roof of the great temple, and enjoyed in a sort of ecstatic solitude one of the grandest and most impressive scenes on the surface of this planet. Looking back towards Nubia, I saw the Nile glittering and tremulous, like a broad stream of molten silver, flowing towards me beneath the moon. It then divides into three branches, and embracing Philæ, with a small sister island lying close beside it on the west, it unites again a little below, and proceeds in tranquil splendour towards the cataracts. All around were wild rocks, towering in pointed pinnacles, here obscure with shadows, there white and luminous with moonlight.

Chasms and ravines, dark as Erebus, appear to descend, and lead the imagination into the bowels of the earth; while far on the north-west, wavy expanses of sand exhibited the Libyan desert descending like a golden cloud towards the Nile. Add to this the

incessant roar of the cataract, becoming louder or fainter according to the fluctuation of air-currents, which carried to or from the ear the echo of its multitudinous utterance.

But to complete the spell of the scene we must descend into the depth of a world invisible to the eye,—into the world of ancient religion, tradition, history, and art. Over this mighty creation Isis reigned paramount. In her breast the gods as well as the faith of the Egyptians were fashioned. She was, as they believed, the mother and the nurse of all. All types of beauty, all modifications of life, all reminiscences of the past, all hopes of the future, originated in her. Through her power whatever is exists. From the depths, therefore, of our own pure religion, and without subjecting our civilization to the dominion of the past, we may still cherish a poetical reverence for Isis; and, without at all comprehending the fabulous duality, extend some portion of the feeling to Him who sleeps in Philæ.

THE END.

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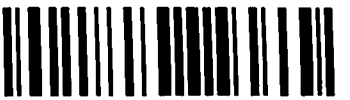

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